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Empire Careers: The Foreign Staff of the Chinese Customs Service, 1854-1949

Catherine Ladds

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Ph.D. in the Faculty of Arts.

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Abstract

This thesis studies the lives and careers of the foreign staff of the Chinese Customs Service between 1854 and 1949, exploring the experience of working for the Customs and the Inspectorate's attempts to mould a cadre of men dedicated to the Customs cause. Through exploring the practical and ideological world of the foreign staff this study illuminates more clearly the Customs' shifting place within the history of modern China, the history of Sino-foreign relations, and the history of work and migrations in the wider empire world. A central aim is to highlight the essential ordinariness of life and work in formal and informal empire and the rather prosaic concerns which often provided the incentive to embark upon an empire career.

I take a 'life cycle' approach to the history of the foreign staff, mapping typical life and career trajectories. Chapter One begins by examining the recruitment experiences and the socio-economic backgrounds of the foreign staff. Chapter Two turns to the everyday working world of the Customs, paying particular attention to the foreign staff's interactions and conflicts with Chinese communities and foreign and Chinese officials at a local level. The extent and character of misconduct and malpractice within the foreign staff is the subject of Chapter Three and Chapter Four explores the social and private lives of foreign employees. Finally, Chapter Five concludes the thesis by examining the endpoint of Customs careers and post-Service destinations and lives.

Above all, this thesis aims to shed more light on the personal ramifications of working within a different state's administration. In their position as employees of a foreign-run multinational service subordinate to the controls of the Chinese government, the national and personal identities and allegiances of Customs men were destabilised, and sometimes remade, during the course of a career.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I owe many thanks to my supervisor at the University of Bristol, Robert Bickers, who has provided much needed advice and criticism since this project's inception. Robert's seemingly exhaustive knowledge of archival resources has proved invaluable throughout my PhD work, and he has also provided countless opportunities to carry out research trips and to present my work to a wider academic audience. Throughout my PhD work other members of the Customs Service project team at Bristol, notably Weipin Tsai and Jamie Carstairs, have provided me with help. I would also like to thank Kirsty Reid at the University of Bristol for her comments and advice in the early stages of this project.

This project was funded by the AHRC, which also supported a ten-month research trip to China. Most of the research for this thesis was carried out at the Second Historical Archive of China in Nanjing, and I would like to thank Jiang Liangqin and Xiao Ruping at Nanjing University for making me feel welcome when I first arrived and for introducing me to the archives staff. Weipin Tsai and Federica Ferlanti, my companions in the Second Historical Archive for several months, also deserve thanks for helping my time in the archive to run more smoothly and for providing moments of diversion from the documents. I would also like to thank all those ancestors of Customs men who have donated papers, letters and photographs to the Customs project, whose contributions are much appreciated.

Most of this thesis was written in the Arts Graduate Centre and I also extend my thanks to my fellow graduate students in the Centre, without whose camaraderie and humour this project may never have been completed. In particular, Cathy Hume, Chris Pearson, Rose White, Kriszta Nagy and Mark Kauntze have provided much-needed support and endless cups of tea. I would also like to thank Justin and, most of all, my parents, Elaine and Dave Ladds, and my grandmother, Sarah Ingram, for their unfailing support and encouragement.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original, except where indicated by special reference in the text, and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other academic award. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: ..... DATE: 31-10-07 .....

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Abbreviations

CAS	Colonial Administrative Service
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCS	Chinese Customs Service
CMC	Chinese Maritime Customs
Hk. Tl.	Haikuan tael
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IG	Inspector General
NRS	Non-Resident Secretary
SMC	Shanghai Municipal Council
SMP	Shanghai Municipal Police
SPS	Sudan Political Service

Introduction

Empire, China, and the Foreign Staff of the Chinese Customs Service

The multinational profile of its personnel has consistently been viewed as one of the defining characteristics of the Chinese Customs Service.[1] For the Service's official historians, this multinationalism was framed in terms of a benign cosmopolitanism, facilitating friendly co-operation between China and a host of other nations and ensuring that allegiances to any one foreign power did not override loyalty to the Customs itself. In the mind of Stanley Fowler Wright, a former Customs Commissioner who became the Foreign Inspectorate's most prolific and ardent chronicler in the 1930s, Customs cosmopolitanism was 'a powerful agent in helping to break down old prejudices and conservatisms, and in strengthening those human sympathies which rise superior to all ties of race, nationality, class, and creed'.[2] In Wright's eyes the Customs, in an era of aggressive imperialistic competition, provided a lesson in the merits and successes of cross-national harmony for the wider world to follow.

For the handful of Western-based academic historians of the Customs Service its foreign character has also been of primary interest. These historians, notably John Fairbank, have asked somewhat different and more revealing questions of the foreign character of the Customs, exploring, for example, the extent of the Foreign Inspectorate's contribution to the emergence of China as a modern nation. These studies have contemplated such issues as how far the Foreign Inspectorate's modernising impetus contributed to bureaucratic and administrative reform and to the development of China's diplomatic relations with the West.[3] Historians in the People's Republic of China,

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[1] The Foreign Inspectorate of Customs was named the Imperial Maritime Customs Service 1854-1911 and the Chinese Maritime Customs Service (CMCS) 1911-1950. To avoid confusion I will refer to it as either the Chinese Customs Service (CCS), the Service, or the Foreign Inspectorate throughout.

[2] Stanley F. Wright, *Hart and the Chinese Customs* (Belfast, 1950), p.8. Stanley Wright was a Commissioner of Customs and was employed as personal secretary to Inspector Generals Sir Frances Aglen and Sir Frederick Maze between 1924 and 1933. He was asked by then-IG Maze to write several histories of the Customs Service after retiring from active work in the Service in 1933. Also see Wright's *The Origin and Development of the Chinese Customs Service, 1843-1911: An Historical Outline* (Shanghai, 1936, privately circulated).

[3] See, for example, John K. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854* (Cambridge MA, first single-volume edition, 1964); Katherine Frost Bruner, John King

however, have taken a very different stance on the issue of the Customs' foreignness. For them, the presence of a foreign-controlled and foreign-staffed institution on Chinese soil was not evidence of benign cosmopolitanism but rather one of the most glaring—and certainly the most institutionalised—examples of imperialist injustice in China.[4]

All, then, agree on the fundamental importance of the Service's foreign character in defining its role and status, yet opinion differs on the question of the Customs' appropriate place in modern history. Is the Foreign Inspectorate—a self-styled 'precursor to the League of Nations'[5]— to be placed within a global context of the emergence of modern nation-states, providing an example of the potential for and limitations of cross-national co-operation? Or, should the Customs be placed firmly within Chinese history as a Western-style institution whose extensive responsibilities and administrative reforms made a key contribution to the development of the modern Chinese state? Alternatively, should the Customs be viewed in the broader context of Western empire-building, as just one dimension of Western imperialist aggression in Asia? This study grows out of the conviction that exploration of the ideological and practical world of the foreign staff can illuminate more clearly the Customs' shifting place within these histories Although most existing histories of the Customs stress its multinational character, no study of the professional world of the foreign staff—particularly its lower level staff—has yet been undertaken. This thesis aims to fill this gap through a study of the lives and careers of the foreign Customs staff and the Inspectorate's attempts to mould a cadre of dedicated men. In the process I will reconsider what the case of the Customs can tell us about the history of modern China, the history of Western and Japanese imperialism in China, and the history of work, migrations and settlement elsewhere in the non-Western world.

Clearly the Customs should be placed within narratives of Chinese history. The Foreign Inspectorate was, after all, never entirely foreign, operating from the start under the supervision of the Chinese government in the context of Chinese political, social and cultural change. Although the higher levels of the Service were reserved for foreigners

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Fairbank, Richard J. Smith (eds.), *Entering China's Service: Robert Hart's Journals, 1854-1863* (Cambridge MA, 1986).

[4] See, for example, Chen Xiafei and Han Rongfang (eds.), *Archives of China's Imperial Maritime Customs: Confidential Correspondence between Robert Hart and James Duncan Campbell, 1874-1907* (Beijing, 1990), 'Introduction', pp. x-xviii.

[5] Wright, *Origins and Development*, p. 4.

until its final decades, the Customs employed a service-listed Chinese staff of approximately 11,270 alongside around 11,000 foreigners during the century of its existence. Exploration of the world of the foreign staff, moreover, particularly in terms of their everyday interactions with Chinese officials and communities and their changing position and status in response to Chinese political developments, adds an extra dimension to work on the Customs' role and place in China. This thesis, however, also aims to go far beyond the boundaries set by existing studies, which limit the relevance of the Customs to the history of China and Sino-foreign relations, by placing the Customs and its staff within its global context. The employment of 11,000 European, American and Japanese men and women in a Chinese service raises significant questions about the nature of migrations, loyalties and identities in the wider empire world. Administrative and policing services in India, Africa, South East Asia and the Middle East, attracted labour and talent—both putative and real—from imperial Britain and elsewhere in Europe and, in the case of the Customs, from America and Japan. These movements and relocations raise the issue of how, at the same time as nation-states were assuming a much more rigid shape, in terms of the citizenship regimes and national identities they promoted, the structures of a globalising world worked to part-fragment national identities and loyalties by pulling out men and women to staff the institutions of formal and informal empire. In particular, specific service loyalties and mindsets could supplant or complicate national identities and allegiances. The Customs foreign staff is a particularly pertinent case study through which to explore the resilience, ambivalence or adaptation of these identities and loyalties during a career overseas. In a multinational service, which claimed to have no clear allegiances to any power except China, national differences amongst the staff were, in theory, subsumed under the larger and more important purpose of serving China.

In addition to highlighting what the case of the Customs foreign staff can add to our understanding of general and comparative issues of overseas migration, different and competing national imperialisms, and the formation of national or colonial identities, this study has another important aim of exploring what it meant to be a foreigner working within a different state's administration. This approach complements my broader agenda of uncovering the human face of empire. In histories of colonial rule colonists were and

are caricatured as authoritarian figures who effortlessly bent colonised peoples to their will, as intrepid adventurers, as dipsomaniac thugs or remittance men, or else as aristocratic wastrels living the high-life in the colonies.[6] This thesis will augment recent attempts to reassess such conventional images of the type of person who sought to live and work in the colonial world.[7] By exploring the *experience* of working for the Customs I will bring attention to the personal and professional triumphs, disasters and uneven trajectories which coloured individual lives and careers. Imperial ideologies and colonial projects overlaid thousands of personal and individual stories and dramas of fortunes made and lost, relationships forged and broken, of loyalties cast away and built anew.

Choosing to work overseas also necessitated acclimatisation to an unfamiliar culture and socialisation into different professional and social structures and behavioural standards. In response to these new influences, personal identities could be unmade and re-formed in the course of an overseas career. The Customs foreign staff is a particularly pertinent case study through which to study the personal ramifications of working within a different state's administration. Although it was controlled by a foreign Inspector General (IG), the Customs always remained an institution subordinate to the controls of the Chinese state and, as employees of that state, foreign Customs men were expected to sideline national allegiances in favour of unerring loyalty to the Service. As such, the foreign Customs staff were reminded of their *difference* from other foreigners in China and were made unequivocally aware of their particular responsibilities as Chinese government employees from the start.[8] The personal dilemmas which grew out of this sense of difference and these special responsibilities were shared with those who worked for other foreign-run and foreign-staffed institutions operating under the supervision of native governments in the empire world, such as the Sino-foreign Salt Inspectorate and the Egyptian customs service.[9]

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[6] See, for example, the picture of delinquent and impoverished British aristocrats resident in Kenya's 'Happy Valley' painted in David Cannadine's *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven CT, 1990), 'The migratory elite', pp. 429-43.

[7] See, for example, Anthony Kirk-Greene, *Britain's Imperial Administrators, 1858-1966* (London, 2000); Robert Bickers, *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai* (London, 2003).

[8] *Documents Illustrative of the Origin, Development and Activities of the Chinese Customs Service,* vol. I (Shanghai, 1936), circular no. 8 of 1864 (first series), p. 37.

[9] On the Sino-foreign Salt Inspectorate see Julia Strauss, *Strong Institutions in Weak Polities: State Building in Republican China, 1927-1940* (Oxford, 1998).

Although the Customs and institutions of a similar status were in many ways atypical among the institutions of empire, study of the Customs foreign staff sheds more light on the complex dynamics of European communities, and the multiplicity of motivations, loyalties and experiences within them, in the wider empire world. Furthermore, study of its lower level staff enables us to gain a different perspective on the Customs' role in Sino-foreign relations, and of the nature of interactions between foreigners and Chinese in the treaty ports more broadly. It is to these literatures—on colonial societies and Sino-foreign relations—and the Customs foreign staff's place within them, that I will turn to next.

1) Overseas administrators and writing the settler story

Study of the foreign staff of the Chinese Customs Service can be placed within a nascent trend in imperial history towards the re-incorporation of settler societies into colonial narratives.[10] Historiographical developments in the past decade have seen an increasingly stark polarisation between the work of scholars concerned, for example, with the intricate workings of colonial rule and the imperial economy and those who have instead fashioned a 'new imperial history' with the agenda of bringing to light the tensions and complexities inherent in imperial interactions.[11] Many of these new histories have turned away from a narrow focus on colonial policy-making towards a more expansive agenda of exploring and examining colonial cultures, broadly defined as the network of cultural processes, practices and values which were 'expressive and constitutive of colonial relationships in themselves'.[12]

This shift in focus has necessarily entailed in depth examination of colonial societies, and how these societies shaped and were shaped by the structures and agents of imperial power. Particularly important to these studies is the role played by colonised peoples within colonial states and societies, be it by contesting and subverting colonial rule or else by ensuring the survival of colonial regimes through systems of collaboration with imperial power.[13] Although much attention has rightly been paid to rewriting colonised

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[10] See, for example, the forthcoming volume of essays; Robert Bickers (ed.), *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons Over the Seas, Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series* (Oxford, forthcoming 2008).

[11] For an example of the policy-centred approach to imperial history see John W. Cell, *British Colonial Administration in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Policy-making Process* (New Haven CT, 1970). For a research agenda of the 'new imperial history' see Kathleen Wilson, 'Introduction: histories, empires, modernities', in Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 1-26. For an analysis of developments in imperial history see Stephen Howe, 'The Slow Death and Strange Rebirths of Imperial History', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 29, no. 2 (2001), pp. 131-41. For an attempt to reconcile empirical imperial history and postcolonial theory see Dane Kennedy, 'Imperial History and Postcolonial Theory', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 24, no. 3 (1996), pp. 345-63.

[12] Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 2. On colonial cultures also see Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, Chapter One, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,' in Cooper and Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley CA, 1997); Catherine Hall, *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester, 2000), 'Introduction: Thinking the Postcolonial, Thinking the Empire'.

[13] On colonial collaboration see Ronald Robinson's classic study, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration', in Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (eds.), *Studies in the*

peoples and societies into imperial history, 'white' settler communities in the empire world have more often than not been neglected in these recent histories. Valuable work has, however, been done on the social, cultural and political dynamics of settler colonies and the Dominions, in studies which attempt 'to trace the complex contours of settler behaviour—their adjustments and resistance to change—in the colonial environment'.[14] Furthermore, although work on 'white' communities elsewhere in the empire world have been less forthcoming, the assumption that these communities were socially and culturally homogenous across the empire and shared unified political affiliations has begun to be critiqued. For example, the distinct identities and social and cultural practices of these societies and their role in bolstering or contesting imperial rule have come under attention.[15] In particular, case studies which emphasise the local specificities of settler identities have highlighted the frequent incompatibility of the interests of settlers and imperial policy-makers.[16] Furthermore, the commonly-held assumption that empire offered myriad social, economic and sexual opportunities for white settlers and sojourners, especially white men, has come under closer scrutiny. In their study of the letters of two settlers in the South Sea Islands, for example, Richard Eves and Nicholas

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Theory of Imperialism (London, 1972), pp. 117-40. More recent studies on colonial 'collaboration' have focused on systems of patronage and on the colonial state's collaboration with native power structures. See, for example, Colin Newbury, *Patrons, Clients and Empire: Chieftaincy and Over-Rule in Asia, Africa and the Pacific* (Oxford, 2003). For the case of Malaya see J. M. Gullick, *Rulers and Residents: Influence and Power in the Malay States, 1870-1920* (Oxford, 1992), Chapter Three, 'Consultation with the ruler' and T. N. Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya* (Cambridge, 1999). For the case of India see C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1988), Chapter Four, 'The consolidation and failure of the East India Company's state, 1818-54', pp. 106-35, and Michael H. Fisher, 'Indirect Rule in the British Empire: The Foundations of the Residence System in India (1794-1858)', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1984), pp. 393-428.

[14] Quote taken from Dane Kennedy, *Islands of White: Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1939* (Durham, NC, 1987). Also see Annie E. Coombes (ed.), *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand and South Africa* (Manchester, 2006).

[15] See, for example, Dane Kennedy, *Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (Berkeley CA, 1996). For an earlier study of a settler society see John G. Butcher, *The British in Malaya 1880-1941* (Oxford, 1979).

[16] See, for example, Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley CA, 2002); Alexander Morrison, '"White Todas": The Politics of Race and Class amongst European Settlers on the Nilgiri Hills, *c.* 1860-1900', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2004), pp. 54-85. For the case of Shanghai see Robert Bickers, 'Shanghailanders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai, 1843-1937', *Past and Present*, no. 159 (1998), pp. 161-211. Also see Nathan A. Pelcovits, *Old China Hands and the Foreign Office* (New York, 1948), for the clash between the mercantile community in China and the Foreign Office.

Thomas draw attention to the frequent *failure* of personal colonial projects, which were often marked by disappointment and fraught with self-doubt.[17]

Debunking the notion that Westerners in empire enjoyed limitless successes also encourages recognition of the tensions and ambiguities within imperialist identities. European settlers, workers and sojourners in empire cannot be subsumed so easily under the banner of 'colonist'. The foreign Customs staff, at once Chinese government employees and representatives of the foreign presence in China, present an especially clear example of these tensions of identity and purpose. The scarcity of scholarship about the Customs staff is, moreover, symptomatic of the way in which studies of imperialism have, until recently, largely ignored the multitudes of ordinary and marginal workers and settlers in the empire world.[18] This thesis is written from the perspective that the lives of the countless administrators, policemen, railwaymen, petty traders and soldiers who oiled the machinery of empire can tell us much more about the everyday operation of imperialism than the careers of distinguished colonial governors and prosperous entrepreneurs.[19]

The current wave of interest in colonial societies has also seen a return to exploring the working worlds of colonial administrative and policing services. Such studies reveal much about the everyday operation of power and status in the colonial world and the day-to-day working and social environments occupied by many workers in empire. Recent studies of colonial police forces, in Africa, India, and Shanghai, for example, have shown how European policemen, who often formed the frontline of contact between colonial states and colonised peoples, were the most visible

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[17] Richard Eves and Nicholas Thomas, *Bad Colonists: The South Sea Islands of Vernon Lee Walker and Louis Becke* (Durham NC, 1999). Eves and Thomas argue that the intrinsic instability of settler identity was exhibited and negotiated through the practice of letter-writing, and that all too frequently the settler was unable 'to write himself up as a confident colonial actor' (p. 16). Also see Peter Marshall, 'The Whites of British India, 1780-1830: A Failed Colonial Society', *International History Review*, vol. 12, no. 1 (1990), pp. 26-44.

[18] For an example of a recent study of marginal groups and individuals in the empire world see Clare Anderson, *Legible Bodies: Race, Criminality and Colonialism in South Asia* (Oxford, 2004).

[19] Examples of studies of imperial administrative services which have largely focused on the careers and policies of high-ranking or eminent governors and officials are: M. W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile: The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan 1898-1934* (Cambridge, 1986); Peter Duignan and L. H. Gann, *The Rulers of British Africa, 1870-1914* (London, 1978); Philip Mason, *The Men Who Ruled India* (London, 1985).

representatives of colonial power yet paradoxically remained socially marginal men.[20] Studies of the staff of colonial administrative services are invaluable in explaining the circumstances and incentives which motivated men and women to embark on colonial careers and also bring to light the essential ordinariness of life in empire for many workers. Leading the way in this respect is Anthony Kirk-Greene, whose *Britain's Imperial Administrators* profiles the staff of the Indian Civil Service (ICS), Colonial Administrative Service (CAS), and the Sudan Political Service (SPS), and whose most recent book, *Symbol of Authority,* surveys the working and social worlds of British District Officers (DOs) in twentieth-century Africa.[21] In particular, Kirk-Greene has emphasised the importance of the attraction of 'a life of public service under the Crown, overseas, invested with rank, respectability, responsibility and reward' as a motivating factor in choosing to work overseas.[22] The promise of overseas adventure and a single-minded commitment to the imperial cause were, it seems, secondary or even minor considerations when embarking on a colonial career. Furthermore, more often than not colonial careers were less than spectacular and often failed to fulfil initial expectations of wealth and status. D. C. M. Platt, for example, argues that opportunities for career advancement in the British consular service were practically non-existent, meaning that the 'the consul faced a life of discomfort and exile in a selection of dreary ports'.[23] An awareness of the routine and sometimes banal nature of everyday life in a colonial setting and recognition of the personal limitations as well as the opportunities presented by empire, adds a further layer of complexity to our picture of life in the colonial world.

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[20] See David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds.), *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control 1830-1940* (Manchester, 1991); for the case of Africa see Anthony Clayton and David Killingray, *Khaki and Blue: Military and Police in British Colonial Africa* (Athens OH, 1989); for India see David Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule: Madras 1859-1947* (Oxford, 1986); for Palestine see Edward Horne, *A Job Well Done: A History of the Palestine Police Force 1920-1948* (Essex, 1982); for Shanghai see Bickers, *Empire Made Me.*

[21] Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrations* and *Symbol of Authority: The British District Officer in Africa* (London, 2006). Also see an earlier study of ICS officers; David Potter, *India's Political Administrators, 1919-83: From ICS to IAS* (Dehli, 1996).

[22] Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, p. 12. On the SPS also see Daly, *Empire on the Nile.* For the lives and careers of two ICS officers see Clive Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: The Mind of the Indian Civil Service* (London, 1993).

[23] D. C. M. Platt, *The Cinderella Service: British Consuls Since 1825* (London, 1971), p. 28. See also P. D. Coates, *The China Consuls: British Consular Officers, 1843-1943* (Oxford, 1988), for a rather anecdotal account of British consular careers in China.

2) Sino-foreign relations: The Customs and imperialism

The Customs Service has for many decades played a central role in historiography on Sino-foreign relations, yet until very recently no book-length study of the CCS in English had emerged.[24] In most histories of the foreign presence the Customs features as one of the 'three pillars' of imperialism in China, the other two being extraterritoriality and ever-present foreign gunboats. For John Fairbank, for whom the Customs held a career-long fascination, the CCS epitomised his overarching theory about the nature of nineteenth-century Sino-foreign relations. In his landmark 1953 study of the beginnings of the treaty port system, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast*, Fairbank lamented that the 'experience of the Chinese people in modern times has been overcast by a pall of frustration and uncertainty, owing to their inability to meet the West on equal terms'.[25] In Fairbank's analysis, rather than rising to the modernising challenge of the West, China sought instead to accommodate the foreign powers in the nineteenth century through the relatively harmonious joint Sino-Western administration of treaty port institutions, which he placed in a continuum of China's long-standing 'institution of *foreign participation* in its government'.[26] Fairbank's model of Sino-foreign administration—which he dubbed 'synarchy'—was embodied by the Foreign Inspectorate of Customs, 'the institution most thoroughly representative of the whole period' of foreign imperialism in China.[27]

Of course, joint Sino-Western administration rarely was entirely harmonious and the precise nature and effects of foreign incursions into China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have long been, and continue to be, hotly debated. On the one hand there are those, including Fairbank and his acolytes, who see the West as impacting upon an unresponsive and quiescent China after 1842. Much energy has thus been devoted to assessing the consequences of the Western 'impact' and the nature of China's

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[24] Donna Brunero, *Britain's Imperial Cornerstone in China: The Chinese Maritime Customs Service, 1854-1949* (Abingdon, 2006).
[25] Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, p. 4.
[26] John K. Fairbank, 'Synarchy Under the Treaties,' in Fairbank (ed.), *Chinese Thought and Institutions* (Chicago, 1957), p. 205. For the Chinese 'world order' see John King Fairbank, 'A Preliminary Framework,' in John King Fairbank (ed.), *The Chinese World Order: China's Traditional Foreign Relations* (Cambridge MA, 1968), pp. 1-19.
[27] Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, p. 463.

'response'—or lack of it. In this view the most dramatic consequence of Western intrusion was the inauguration of a 'treaty system interlude' in 1842-44, which forcibly supplanted the tribute system and disrupted and eventually transformed Chinese state and society.[28] Certain historians have also credited the foreign presence with ushering in a new age of modernisation in China, at the forefront of which was the Foreign Inspectorate of Customs. Fairbank, for example, claimed that 'modernity, however defined, was a Western, not a Chinese, invention', and he attributed a key role to the Foreign Inspectorate and to Robert Hart in bringing modernity to China's shores.[29]

Not all historians, however, have viewed the Foreign Inspectorate's role in Sino-foreign relations in such complimentary terms. Stephen Lyon Endicott, for example, points out that the Customs was instrumental in upholding the artificially low five per cent tariff on foreign trade and argues that the Inspectorate 'provided many opportunities to meddle and pry into China's internal affairs'.[30] Historians with a staunchly anti-imperialist political agenda, both in the West and in the PRC, have viewed *all* Western involvement in China in entirely negative terms of imperialistic aggression.[31] Especially for historians in the PRC, moreover, the Foreign Inspectorate has long been reviled as the backbone of imperialistic oppression in China.[32]

All these models of Sino-foreign relations, and of the Customs' place within them, are, of course, in some way problematic. In his 1984 call for a 'China-centred history of China' Paul Cohen rightly pointed out that such all-encompassing theories of the modernising impact of the foreign presence and the nature of China's response to the West betray a 'Western-centeredness that robs China of its autonomy and makes it, in the

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[28] John K. Fairbank, 'The Creation of the Treaty System', in Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China: Late Ch'ing*, vol. 10 (Cambridge, 1978), p. 214. Opinion, however, continues to differ wildly as to the extent to which the foreign presence changed China. Rhoads Murphey, for example, argues that the effects of the Western 'assault' on China was confined exclusively to the treaty ports. Rhoads Murphey, *The Outsiders: The Western Experience in India and China* (Ann Arbor MI, 1977).

[29] Fairbank at al (eds.), *Entering China's Service*, p. 1.

[30] Stephen Lyon Endicott, *Diplomacy and Enterprise: British China Policy, 1933-37* (Vancouver, 1975), p. 6.

[31] See, for example, Hu Sheng, *Imperialism and Chinese Politics* (Westport CN, 1973, Chinese edition 1955); Frances Moulder, *Japan, China, and the Modern World Economy: Toward a Reinterpretation of East Asian Development ca. 1600 to ca. 1918* (Cambridge, 1977).

[32] See, for example, Chen and Han (eds.), *Archives of China's Imperial Maritime Customs*, 'Introduction,' pp. x-xviii.

end, an intellectual possession of the West'.[33] In histories emanating from the West, moreover, events which spotlighted Western aggressors or agents—such as the Opium War and the Boxer Rising—are privileged as watershed moments in the development of modern China and, moreover, Chinese actors and policies are often sidelined.[34] The debates surrounding the history of China's foreign relations, however, show no sign of abating, and, moreover, continue to be politically charged.[35] Since Cohen's call to arms against Western-centricism, histories that emphasise China's role in shaping the course of Sino-foreign relations and generating change have been more forthcoming.[36] William C. Kirby's study of foreign relations in Republican China, for example, whilst arguing that 'foreign relations in this era became, quite simply, all penetrating, all permeating, all prevailing', has championed China's 'transition from pupil [of the West] to power' in this period.[37] The Customs Service has much to contribute to these continuing debates about the nature Sino-foreign relations, not least because its conflicting loyalties and the diverse composition of its staff complicates and challenges the construction of overarching theories about the nature and impact of the foreign presence.

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[33] Paul Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York, 1984), p. 161.

[34] On the Opium War see Frederic Wakeman, *Strangers at the Gate: Social Disorder in South China, 1839-1861* (Berkeley CA, 1966) and James M. Polachek, *The Inner Opium War* (Cambridge MA, 1992). On the Boxer Rising see Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising: A Background Study* (Berkeley CA, 1987) and Paul Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York, 1997).

[35] See, for example, Tani Barlow, 'Colonialism's Career in Postwar China Studies', in Tani Barlow (ed.), *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia* (Durham NC, 1997). Barlow contends that American scholars have deliberately downplayed the realities of American imperialism in China to ensure that the United States did not end up 'on the wrong side of the narrative, on the side of the ~~imperialists~~ and ~~colonists~~' (p. 374). For an earlier critique of the Harvard school of Chinese studies see Joseph Esherick, 'Harvard on China: The Apologetics of Imperialism', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian* Scholars, no. 4 (1972), pp. 9-16. Also see Joseph Esherick's impassioned critique of James Hevia's *Cherishing Men from Afar*; 'Cherishing Sources from Afar', *Modern China*, vol. 24, no. 2, (1998), pp. 135-61. Esherick accused Hevia of deliberately misinterpreting Chinese sources to fit his postcolonial methodological and political agenda. For a survey of recent literature on Sino-foreign relations see Paul Cohen, *China Unbound: Evolving Perspectives on the Chinese Past* (New York, 2003), Chapter Seven, 'Revisiting *Discovering History in China*', pp. 185-99.

[36] See, for example, James Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham NC, 1995) and also Hevia's, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (Durham NC, 2003).

[37] William C. Kirby, 'The Internationalization of China: Foreign Relations at Home and Abroad in the Republican Era', *The China Quarterly*, no 150 (1997), p. 433. Also see Kirby's *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford CA, 1984), in which he stresses Germany and China's *mutual* economic interests in the 1930s.

Although the impact of imperialism in China has assumed centre stage in the realm of China studies, China has not usually been assigned a prominent place in the field of colonial studies. As imperialism in China was usually 'informal' in character—with a few notable exceptions[38]— relying on forms of economic, political and cultural domination bolstered by 'unequal treaties' rather than the extinguishment of Chinese sovereignty, it has often been dismissed as a peripheral concern by historians of empire.[39] This avoidance of the complex issues surrounding the operation of imperialism in China, however, looks set to change. The current enthusiasm for issues colonialist in US academia, has given rise to a wave of recent studies on colonialism and semicolonialism in China from a variety of disciplinary perspectives currently prominent in the field of colonial studies.[40] Meng Yue's reassessment of semicolonialism in Shanghai, for example, draws heavily on geopolitical theory, viewing the city's cultural and socio-political landscape in terms of a series of 'overlapping territories', and particularly as the site where two empires—foreign and Chinese—intersected.[41] From the perspective of literary studies, Lydia Liu has explored the legacies of 'sovereign thinking' in China, aiming to 'read' empire by 'thinking historically about the intimate connections among language, war, international law, semiotic inventions, and the idea of foreignness'.[42] These studies are accompanied by a revival of *historical* interest in colonialism in China, which also characterises the operation of imperialism in terms of cultural and political

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[38] Exceptions include: the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong gained in the Treaty of Nanjing and the adjacent New Territories gained in 1898 (both returned to China in 1997); the British leased territory of Weihaiwei, which was returned to China in 1930; Jiaozhou Bay, a German leased territory from 1897 to 1922, reoccupied by the Japanese in 1938; Manchuria, occupied by Japan 1931-45; the Guandong Leased Territory leased by Russia 1898-1905 and Japan 1905-45; Guangzhouwan leased by France 1898-43.

[39] See, for example, Britten Dean, 'British Informal Empire: The Case of China', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1976), pp. 64-81. Dean argued that British involvement in China cannot be construed as 'informal empire' because '*on the whole* British merchants or British "free trade imperialism" failed economically to effectively subordinate China to Great Britain or to British merchants' (p. 75). An exception to this lack of studies of imperialism in China is Jürgen Osterhammel's essay, 'Semi-Colonialism and Informal empire in Twentieth-Century China: Towards a Framework of Analysis', in Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds.), *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities* (London, 1986), pp. 290-314. Also see Osterhammel, 'Britain and China, 1842-1914', in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: vol. 3, the nineteenth century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 146-69.

[40] For an example of the current excitability about colonial issues see Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley CA, 2005).

[41] Meng Yue, *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires* (Minneapolis, 2006), 'Introduction: The Border of Histories', p. vii-xxx.

[42] Lydia H. Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge MA, 2004), p. 2.

encounters. John Carroll's study of colonial Hong Kong, for example, argues that viewing colonial histories as evidence of cultural clashes and straightforward exploitation obscures the frequent *failures* of colonial rule and the accommodations and collaborations which often accompanied it.[43] Other studies, too, have placed imperialism in China in the context of broader issues such as the interaction and tensions between globalisation, the emergence and consolidation of nation states, imperialism and modernity. Prasenjit Duara, for example, has studied the Japanese colonial state of Manzhuguo in terms of what this case study can tell us about the problems of twentieth-century modernity, particularly in East Asia, and how claims to 'cultural authenticity' were used to bolster nation-building and imperialism.[44]

As the *loci* of foreign industrial and financial power and the home of China's largest foreign communities the treaty ports have been a particular focus of studies of colonialism in China.[45] Often described as islands of modernity, or cosmopolitan and progressive havens for Western expatriates and enterprising Chinese, the treaty ports are frequently viewed as being essentially at odds with Chinese society.[46] Of all the treaty ports Shanghai has come to epitomise both the greatest successes and worst excesses of foreign power in China. Reviled for much of the PRC as a symbol of imperialist capitalist greed and exalted by some Western historians as an enclave of modernity in China's otherwise barren landscape, Shanghai does not provoke ambivalent responses.[47] Examples of foreign violence, such as the killing of student demonstrators by the

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[43] John M. Carroll, *Edges of Empires: Chinese Elites and British Colonials in Hong Kong* (MA, 2005), Introduction, pp. 1-15 and Chapter One, 'Colonialism and Collaboration: Chinese Subjects and the Making of British Hong Kong', pp. 16-36. Other historical reassessments of colonialism in China include Bryna Goodman, 'Improvisations on a semicolonial theme, or, how to read a celebration of transnational urban community', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 59, no. 4 (2000), pp. 889-926; Hevia, *English Lessons.*

[44] Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham MD, 2003).

[45] For the operation of foreign business and finance in China see P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (Harlow, second edition 2002), Chapter Thirteen, '"Maintaining the Credit-Worthiness of the Chinese Government": China, 1839-1911', pp. 360-80. Also see Jürgen Osterhammel, 'Imperialism in Transition: British Business and the Chinese Authorities, 1931-37', *China Quarterly*, no. 98 (June 1984), pp. 260-86.

[46] See, for example, Lucian Pye, 'How China's Nationalism was Shanghaied', *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 29 (1993), pp. 107-33. Pye argues that the treaty port system created the 'division between the enclave cultures of coastal China, which gave dynamism to the country's modernization, and an interior China, with its claim of being the authentic China' (p. 115).

[47] Shanghai continues to feed the imaginations of popular historians. See, for example, Stella Dong, *Shanghai: The Rise and Fall of a Decadent City* (New York, 2000).

Shanghai Municipal Police (SMP) on 30 May 1925, and daily symbols of the injustices of imperialist sway—notably the fabled 'Chinese and Dogs not Admitted' sign in Shanghai's Huangpu Park—have become embedded in Shanghai's mythology.[48] In terms of the size and influence of its foreign presence Shanghai was an anomaly in China. The city boasted the largest foreign-owned business and industrial sector in China and in the International Settlement the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC), dominated by British merchant interests, reigned over China's largest foreign-controlled enclave.[49] In 1935 the International Settlement alone was home to around 6,600 British nationals, 20,000 Japanese, 3,000 White Russian émigrés, and 2,000 Americans, who lived alongside 1.1 million Chinese inhabitants.[50]

The question of just how pervasive the foreign presence in Shanghai was is, however, a contentious one. Whereas some scholars point to the conspicuousness of foreign power in the Bund's ostentatious Western-style architecture, the British and Sikh policemen who patrolled the International Settlement and the visible British military presence, others contend that the vast majority of Chinese inhabitants remained blissfully unaware of the foreign presence.[51] Many of these debates encircle the question of whether Shanghai was in essence foreign or Chinese and have led some scholars to convincingly conclude that Shanghai may well have been unique in China, yet this uniqueness did not necessarily mean it was entirely foreign. As Marie-Claire Bergère has argued, Shanghai *was* an exceptional city, yet it was nonetheless 'a China just as real as that of the countryside, with its roots deep in the tradition of the trading classes but

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[48] For May Thirtieth see Nicholas Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire: Westerners in Shanghai and the Chinese Revolution of the 1920s* (Hanover NH, 1991), Chapter Six, 'China's Bastille: May Thirtieth and its Background'. Also see Elizabeth J. Perry, *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labor* (Stanford CA, 1993), Chapter Four, 'Heyday of Radicalism, 1919-27', pp. 69-87. For the debates and myth-making surrounding the notorious park sign see Robert A. Bickers and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, 'Shanghai's "Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted" Sign: Legend, History and Contemporary Symbol', *China Quarterly*, no. 142 (1995), p. 444.

[49] The SMC was formed out of the Land Renters committee in 1854, and the SMP was founded in the same year. Chinese were denied representation on the Council until 1928 when three seats were allocated to Chinese representatives. See Bickers, 'Shanghailanders'.

[50] Figures taken from Bickers, 'Shanghailanders', p. 176.

[51] On Shanghai's foreign architecture see Jon W. Huebner, 'Architecture on the Shanghai Bund', *Papers on Far Eastern History*, xxxix (1989), pp. 127-54. Also see Jeremy E. Taylor, 'The Bund: Littoral Space of empire in the Treaty Ports of East Asia', *Social History*, vol. 27, no. 2 (2002), pp. 125-42. For the argument that the foreign presence barely penetrated the consciousness of the Chinese population on an everyday basis see Lu Hanchao's nostalgia-laden *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Life in Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley CA, 1999).

opening up to a new vision of the world and its own role in the world'.[52] Shanghai's position as an international entrepôt, teeming with both foreign and distinctly Chinese cultural and political influences, made it an ideal site for Chinese political ferment and the development of a peculiarly Chinese brand of modernity.[53]

The Customs establishment, too, occupied an important place within Shanghai. Shanghai was the birthplace of the Foreign Inspectorate and, as the treaty port which handled the largest volume of foreign trade, the city was also the site of the largest—and most visually-imposing—custom house in China. For the time between the Nationalist revolution in 1928 and Pearl Harbor in 1941, Shanghai was also home to the Inspectorate's headquarters. As an institution which straddled the foreign and Chinese arenas, both in terms of its authority and personnel and in terms of its everyday work, study of the operation of the Shanghai custom house and of its staff can do much to enrich our understanding of the foreign presence in Shanghai and of the relationship between the often-overlapping Chinese and foreign worlds. The real value of the Customs' history, however, lies in what it tells us about the foreign presence in other prominent treaty ports and, moreover, in the tiny ports and inland stations far beyond the large coastal enclaves. As the number of treaty ports grew so did the ground covered by the Customs—in 1864 the Customs was operating in fourteen ports and by 1931 this number had grown to forty-seven, its control over foreign trade stretching from the busy commercial centres of Shanghai and Canton to the furthest inland reaches of southwest China. In 1901, under the terms of the Boxer Protocol, the Customs assumed control of nineteen Native Customs stations—which administered all riverine and coastal domestic trade—and retained responsibility for these stations until June 1931.[54] Study of the working and social lives of the Customs staff, therefore, takes us far beyond the confines

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[52] Marie-Claire Bergère, '"The Other China": Shanghai from 1919 to 1949', in Christopher Howe (ed.), *Shanghai: Revolution and Development in an Asian Metropolis* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 34.

[53] For Shanghai modernity and the growth of a distinctively Chinese commodity culture in Shanghai see Wen-hsin Yeh, 'Shanghai Modernity: Commerce and Culture in a Republican City', *China Quarterly*, no. 150 (1997), pp. 375-94. On the relationship between semicolonialism and Chinese literary modernism in Republican China see Shu-Mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937* (Berkeley CA, 2001).

[54] Wright, *Origins and Development*, pp. 72-5. The Boxer Protocol stipulated that the Foreign Inspectorate should assume control of the revenues from Native Customs stations within a 50 *li* radius of open ports, a proportion of which would be used to repay the Boxer Indemnity. On the Boxer Indemnity and the Customs see Frank H. H. King, 'The Boxer Indemnity—"Nothing but Bad"', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2006), pp. 663-89.

of Shanghai and can tell us much about the tiny foreign communities resident in these ports, their interactions with Chinese residents and the play of foreign power in the local context.

A more recent development in the field of Sino-foreign relations, for which the foreign Customs staff holds no small degree of import, is the handful of studies of China's foreign communities which have emerged in the past decade. For the most part, these studies, too, have focused on Shanghai, the first port of entry for most foreign settlers, expatriates and sojourners arriving in China and the city where the largest foreign communities congregated.[55] Particularly in their focus on settlers, these case studies show how foreign communities resident in Shanghai often belied the city's reputation as a cosmopolitan melting pot of numerous national cultures. Shanghai's settler communities, it emerges, were often decidedly parochial in outlook, fiercely protecting their national heritages and their rights to settlement in Shanghai whilst maintaining a guarded distance from Chinese society and culture. Joshua Fogel, for example, has observed of the Shanghai-Japanese community that they 'were living in Shanghai and, as much as possible, still in Japan, but, with few exceptions they were doing everything possible not to be living in China'.[56] In his study of the British presence Robert Bickers argues that Britons in China, especially settlers, incorporated three main strands into their distinct identity: 'British, imperialist, local'.[57] Recent studies of the impoverished twentieth-century Russian and Jewish refugee communities have also highlighted how Shanghai's purportedly cosmopolitan culture and composition did not operate benignly.[58] Like their counterparts elsewhere in the empire world, settler communities in China were structured around complex hierarchies in which individuals were assigned a place according to their race, nationality, social standing and class.

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[55] See Robert Bickers and Christian Henriot (eds.), *New Frontiers: Imperialism's New Communities in East Asia, 1842-1953* (Manchester, 2000) for a collection of essays on foreign communities in Asia with a focus both on and beyond Shanghai.

[56] Joshua A. Fogel, '"Shanghai-Japan": The Japanese Residents' Association of Shanghai', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 59, no. 4 (2000), p. 931.

[57] Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism, 1900-1949* (Manchester, 2000), p. 108. On the British settler community in Shanghai also see, Bickers, 'Shanghailanders'.

[58] Marcia Reynders Ristaino, *Port of Last Resort: The Diaspora Communities of Shanghai* (Stanford CA, 2001).

Although the Inspectorate was adamant that it served China first and foremost, the Customs always had multiple allegiances, and its often-conflicting loyalties bring to light some of the dilemmas and intricacies of the play of foreign power in China. For example, in their position as employees of the Chinese government the treaty clauses which underpinned foreign settlement and privilege in China—most notably extraterritoriality—were often called into question in reference to the foreign Customs staff.[59] Study of the working lives of the foreign staff—those individuals who often formed a frontline of contact between the foreign presence and Chinese communities—also throws light on the everyday collaborations and confrontations which characterised foreign-Chinese interactions. Furthermore, the gulf in status between the Indoor Staff and 'outdoor' branches, and their relative places within China's foreign communities, tells us much about the hierarchies and divisions within foreign society. Much more revealing questions can, therefore, be asked of the Customs other than the Inspectorate's relationship with imperialism and its role in bolstering foreign economic incursions in China.

[59] Extraterritoriality, a clause in the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing which exempted citizens of those states who had signed treaties with China from Chinese law, made foreigners in China (with the exception of 'stateless' individuals such as Russian refugees) legally answerable to their states' diplomatic representatives. For the only book-length study of extraterritorality, dealing with the American case, see Eileen Scully, *Bargaining with the State from Afar: American Citizenship in Treaty Port China, 1844-1942* (New York, 2002). For the workings of extraterritoriality and citizenship in the Japanese case see Barbara Brooks, *Japan's Imperial Diplomacy: Consuls, Treaty Ports, and War in China, 1895-1938* (Honolulu, 2000), Chapter Three, 'The Japanese Consul in China', and Barbara Brooks, 'Japanese Colonial Citizenship in Treaty Port China: The Location of Koreans and Taiwanese in the Imperial Order', in Bickers and Henriot, *New Frontiers*.

3) History, legitimacy and the Customs

Perhaps surprisingly for a revenue-collecting agency, history was a weighty matter for the Customs Service. By expounding upon its modernising and reformist effects on China's administration, diplomacy, revenue and technological expertise in its commissioned histories, the Foreign Inspectorate could legitimise its role in China and justify the presence of an expensive foreign staff on the Chinese government's payroll. For one, a sense of the Customs' contribution to China's historical development was essential to the moulding of a committed corps of Customs men convinced of the legitimacy of the Customs' undertakings. As such, history was an integral part of the Customs college (established 1908) curriculum and handbooks issued to new recruits stressed the valuable role played by the foreign staff in the fulfilment of the Customs mission. A 1922 handbook for foreign candidates to the Indoor Staff instructed potential recruits that the 'remedy' for China's fiscal inefficiency was 'a system of Customs administration preserving the Chinese authority but introducing foreign methods and discipline—which could only be brought about by the employment of foreigners in the Chinese service'.[60] Crucial to rescuing China's customs administration from institutional decay and pervasive corruption were the foreign staff.

Not content with imbuing its staff with an awareness of their Service's history, the twentieth-century Inspectorate was also keen to raise its international profile through lessons in Customs history. The vast majority of existing Customs histories were, therefore, commissioned by the Inspectorate or else written by its personnel. Moreover, during the century of its existence the Service ranks produced a fair number of scholars, historians, memoirists and biographers, many of whom were keen to pen recollections of their time in the Customs.[61] Certain members of the Customs personnel proved to be prolific historians of China in general and the CMC in particular. In the late nineteenth

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[60] Second Historical Archive of China, Nanjing (hereafter CSA), 679(1) 21540, *Origin and Organisation of the Chinese Customs Service* (Shanghai: Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs, 1922), p.2.

[61] Some examples of Customs memoirs in English are: Paul King, *In the Chinese Customs Service: A Personal Record of Forty-seven Years* (London, 1980, first edition 1924); William F. Tyler, *Pulling Strings in China* (London, 1929); L. C. Arlington, *Through the Dragon's Eyes: Fifty Years' Experiences as a Foreigner in the Chinese Government Service* (London, 1931); A. H. Rasmussen, *China Trader* (New York, 1954).

century Zenone Volpicelli, in the Indoor Staff 1881-99 and writing under the penname of 'Vladimir', published two histories of China and J. O. P. Bland, in the Indoor Staff 1883-96, embarked upon a post-Customs career as a journalist, memoirist and popular historian of China.[62] Similarly, Bertram Lenox Simpson, in the Customs 1896-1901, enjoyed notoriety as a treaty port polemicist and popular novelist under the pseudonym Putnam Weale whereas E. M. Gull, in the Indoor Staff 1906-14, earned decidedly more distinguished recognition for his writings on British economic interests in China.[63] H. B. Morse, a Customs Commissioner employed 1874-1909, gained academic recognition in his second career as a historian of China's trade and international relations and Stanley Fowler Wright, in the Indoor Staff 1903-38, was appointed the Service's official historian in 1933.[64]

Concern with preserving personal reputations also partly accounts for the Inspectorate's curious preoccupation with posterity. It also comes as no surprise that the main impetus to secure the Customs' historical legacy came from Frederick Maze, who more than any of his predecessors needed to legitimise his appointment to the Inspector-Generalship.[65] Maze had fought bitterly for the post of IG in 1927-9—defeating, after a long battle, the British Legation-nominated candidate and officiating IG Edwardes—and

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[62] By Zenone Volpicelli, or 'Vladimir', see *The China-Japan war compiled from Japanese, Chinese and foreign sources* (London, 1896) and *Russia on the Pacific, and the Siberian Railway* (London, 1899). By J. O. P. Bland and E. Backhouse see *Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Peking* (London, 1914) and *China under the Empress Dowager: Being the history of the life and times of Tzu Hsi* (London, 1910). By Bland see *China, Japan and Korea* (London, 1921) and *China: The Pity of it* (London, 1932).

[63] Simpson's publications include: *The Coming Struggle in Eastern Asia* (London, 1908); *The Altar Fire, or, the Story of the Chinese Revolution* (London, 1917); *China's Crucifixion* (New York, 1928). E. M. Gull's major work was *British Economic Interests in the Far East* (London, 1943).

[64] For Morse's life and career see John K. Fairbank, Martha Henderson Coolidge and Richard J. Smith, *H. B. Morse: Customs Commissioner and Historian of China* (Lexington KT, 1995), especially Chapter Fourteen, 'Morse as Historian'. Morse's major historical works include the three-volume *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*, (London, 1910-18); *The Trade and Administration of the Chinese Empire* (New York, 1908); *The Chronicles of the East India Company, Trading to China, 1635-1834*, five vols. (Oxford, 1926-29). On the eve of his retirement in 1933 Wright was asked by Maze to stay on for five more years as Service historian. The works Wright completed during this five year period were; *China's Customs Revenue Since the Revolution of 1911* (Shanghai: Statistical Department of the CMC, 1936); the privately circulated *The Origin and Development of the Chinese Customs Service: 1845-1911* (1936); the compilation of Customs circulars and documents for the seven-volume *Documents Illustrative of the Origin, Development and Activities of the Chinese Customs Service* (Shanghai, 1936-40). Wright had previously written *Hong Kong and the Chinese Customs* (Shanghai: Statistical Department of the CMC, 1930) and went on to complete his biography of Hart, *Hart and the Chinese Customs*, in 1950.

[65] For a detailed discussion of the uses and abuses of Customs history, and of Maze's motivations for investing in it, see Robert Bickers, 'Purloined Letters: History and the Chinese Maritime Customs Service,' *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2006), pp. 691-723.

was, moreover, lambasted in the foreign treaty port press for his willingness to swear an oath of loyalty to the Nationalist government.[66] Consequently, during his time as IG he worked hard to establish his own version of Customs history as the definitive one, styling himself as the natural heir to his uncle, Sir Robert Hart, venerated as the true founding father of the Service.[67] In the face of growing anti-imperialist sentiment in the 1930s Maze was also concerned with highlighting the impressive modernising achievements of the CCS, pioneered in the nineteenth century and built upon by Maze in the 1930s, which served to press home the indispensable role played by the Foreign Inspectorate in China's transformation into a modern nation.[68]

Always sensitive to accusations of collusion with imperialism, the Inspectorate's self-publicising drive in the 1930s promoted the nineteenth-century Customs as an entirely benevolent and regenerative force, propelling China towards reform and modernisation of her anachronistic ways. Yet, however much the Inspectorate might try to obscure its connections with foreign imperialism in China by styling itself as 'a cosmopolitan league working for the welfare and advancement of the Chinese people', its beginnings were undoubtedly tied up with the mid-nineteenth-century revival of foreign intrusion into China after the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing opened five Chinese ports to foreign trade and residence.[69] Especially in the early years of its life, the Customs Service and the diplomatic and consular representatives of the foreign powers vying for a stake in the China market shared a common aim of safeguarding the smooth passage of foreign trade in China and ensuring that both China and Britain fulfilled their treaty

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[66] For the 1927-29 Customs succession crisis see Bickers, *Britain in China*, pp. 120-21; Martyn Atkins, *Informal Empire in Crisis: British Diplomacy and the Chinese Customs Succession, 1927-29* (Ithaca NY, 1995); Brunero, *Britain's Imperial Cornerstone in China*, pp. 79-98.

[67] At times he did this through rather underhand means, including manipulating the record he would leave behind in the Customs archive, tightly controlling the use of the Inspectorate archive and even illegitimately taking parts of the archive into his own possession. See Bickers, 'Purloined Letters', for a full account of these activities.

[68] See, for example, T. R. Banister's *The Coastwise Lights of China* (Shanghai, 1933) and Stanley Wright's *China's Struggle for Tariff Autonomy* (1938). Also the seven-volume collection of Customs documents edited by Stanley Wright, *Documents Illustrative* (Shanghai, 1936-40), which prudently circumvented the Aglen Inspectorate and instead emphasised Hart and Maze's achievements.

[69] Wright, *Origins and Development*, p. 4. Also see L. K. Little, 'Introduction', in John K. Fairbank, Katherine Frost Bruner and Elizabeth M. Matheson (eds.), *The I.G. in Peking: Letters of Robert Hart, Chinese Maritime Customs, 1868-1907*, vol. 1 (Cambridge MA, 1975).

obligations of remitting and collecting the agreed Customs duties.[70] This was the reasoning behind the establishment of the provisional consular system of administering foreign trade at Shanghai in 1853 as an emergency measure in response to the disruption caused by the Small Swords Uprising in September that year.[71] The permanent Foreign Inspectorate of Customs which replaced the 'provisional system' on 12 July 1854 was, moreover, under the direct control of the treaty power consuls in its infancy, until it was eventually reclaimed by the Chinese government on the appointment of H. N. Lay as the first Inspector General in May 1855.[72]

Much weight has also been attached to the Customs' apparently anomalous status in the empire world in Service histories. According to Stanley Wright, the Customs was 'unique among the civil services of the world, unique in its origin, unique in the political vicissitudes through which it has passed, unique in the composition of its staff... and unique in the varied duties it has been called on to perform'.[73] In regard to its status as a foreign-run organisation subordinate to the controls of a native state the Customs was not, however, entirely without parallels in the non-Western world. The Egyptian customs service operated along similar lines and in China the Sino-foreign Salt Inspectorate, formed in 1913 to reorganise and reform the Salt Gabelle, was modelled on the Foreign Inspectorate of Customs.[74] In terms of the extensive range of activities it undertook and the sheer length of its existence, however, the Customs *was* distinctive. Always much more than a revenue-collecting agency, the Foreign Inspectorate's responsibilities soon

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[70] Article II of the Treaty of Nanjing stipulated that the British authorities should guarantee a regular levy of duties on their trade with China. Opinion in Britain was initially divided between those who believed that the British consul should assume responsibility for the collection of duties on British trade and those who believed that the British authorities should avoid such obligations; see John K. Fairbank, 'The Definition of the Foreign Inspector's Status (1854-55): A Chapter in the Early History of the Inspectorate of Customs at Shanghai', *Nankai Social and Economic Quarterly,* 9:1 (1936), pp.129-132.

[71] See Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, Chapters Twenty-one and Twenty-two, for an account of the operation of the provisional system in Shanghai and the events leading up to it.

[72] See Fairbank, 'Definition of the Foreign Inspector's Status', for an analysis of the early days of the Foreign Inspectorate of Customs at Shanghai and the renunciation of consular control. Until the appointment of Lay as Inspector General on 31 May 1855 the Customs was controlled by three inspectors appointed by the British, American and French consuls. These inspectors were Thomas Francis Wade (British vice-consul), Arthur Smith (interpreter to the French consulate) and Lewis Carr (of the American legation).

[73] Wright, *Hart and the Chinese Customs,* p.1.

[74] For the formation and organisation of the Sino-foreign Salt Inspectorate see Strauss, *Strong Institutions in Weak Polities*, Chapter Three, 'Overcoming Institution-Building Dilemmas: The Sino-Foreign Salt Inspectorate', pp. 58-79. As far as I am aware there is no literature on the Egyptian customs service.

grew to be far-reaching. After Hart took the helm in 1863 the Customs began to be fashioned into a powerful and efficient bureaucracy. Hart's political connections with influential officials in the Qing state ensured that his expansionist and modernising impetus was practically granted a free rein by the Zongli Yamen, under whose jurisdiction the Customs operated after its inception in 1861.[75] The Customs Marine Department (created in 1865 **1868?**, disbanded shortly afterwards in 1870 **1871?** and permanently re-established in 1881) pioneered the lighting of the China coast; the printing press of the Statistical Department (created 1873) produced publications and reports on countless China-related topics; China's post office was founded (1896) under the auspices of the Customs;[76] and prominent personalities in the foreign staff sometimes assumed diplomatic functions.[77] Guiding these activities was Robert Hart (IG 1863-1908).

The enigmatic figure of Sir Robert Hart has dominated histories of the Customs. Hart's inimitable style of leadership, his role as a diplomatic mediator, the vast expansion of the Customs' duties under his tutelage, and the recognition that by the turn of the nineteenth century he was the most influential foreigner in China have ensured that Hart captivated the imaginations of his historians. Predictably, Hart's biographies contain nothing but praise for his apparently tireless and selfless devotion to China's modernisation.[78] In his *magnum opus*, *Hart and the Chinese Customs,* Stanley Wright wrote the following summary of Hart's career:

> From the outset of his career as Inspector-General he dedicated himself to the cause of China; gradually, as the work grew upon him, putting leisure, domestic happiness, and the getting of gain behind him. He espoused the Service, finding in its problems of

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[75] For an analysis of Hart's relationship with Zongli Yamen officials, particularly Prince Gong and Wenxian, see Richard S. Horowitz, 'Politics, Power and the Chinese Maritime Customs Service: The Qing Restoration and the Ascent of Robert Hart', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2006), pp. 549-81. Also see his 'Mandarins and Customs Inspectors: Western Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China Reconsidered', *Papers on Chinese History*, vol. 7 (1998), pp. 41-57. In the late Qing era the Inspectorate reported to the Waiwubu, the foreign ministry. From 1906 it operated under the control of the Shuiwuju—the Revenue Board—which in turn reported to the ministry of finance.

[76] In the 1860s the Customs Post was established to carry the correspondence of the foreign Legations between the treaty ports. In 1896 this organisation became the Imperial Post Office, operating as a department of the Customs Service until it was transferred to the jurisdiction of the ministry of posts and communications in 1911.

[77] For a synopsis of the Customs Service's extensive duties see Wright, *Origins and Development*, Chapter One, pp. 1-4.

[78] See, for example, Hart's first biography, written by his niece, Juliet Bredon, *Sir Robert Hart: The Romance of a Great Career* (London, 1909).

> administration satisfaction for the intellectual side of his nature, and some degree of emotional compensation in the warm human contacts with members of his staff and of the Peking community.[79]

The memoirs and biographies of other Customs personnel tell a different story; admiration for Hart's achievements was often tempered with resentment towards his idiosyncratic mode of leadership and his infamous tendency to bear grudges.[80] Chinese historians, too, have formed a very different image of Hart. For the editors of the four-volume edition of the Hart-Campbell correspondence 'Hart was a far-sighted colonist', a compromise that reconciled the recognition that Hart introduced valuable administrative reforms to the Customs with the argument that the IG was explicitly allied with foreign aggression in China.[81]

In Western academia, however, the tenacity of the Hart myth is remarkable. Hart's career and persona also preoccupied Fairbank; the great IG was the subject of two of his major Customs projects, *The I.G. in Peking* and a two-volume edition of his journals, *Entering China's Service* (1986) and *Robert Hart and China's Modernization* (1991). For the editors 'the secret of Hart's success lay in the degree to which he became bicultural', through immersion in Chinese culture, language and politics, enabling him to act as a personal mediator between Qing officials and British diplomats.[82] Recently, more considered interpretations of Hart's achievements have emerged. Richard Horowitz, for example, has reassessed Hart's political manoeuvrings, casting him as 'a political man who leavened his principled arguments for an independent Customs service and administrative honesty with an ample concern for his own self-interest', rather than a politically impartial mediator.[83] Similarly, Hans van de Ven, in his study of Robert

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[79] Wright, *Hart and the Chinese Customs*, p. 855.

[80] Paul King, in the Indoor Staff 1874-1921, was one of Hart's harshest critics. See his memoir, *In the Chinese Customs Service*. Also see Ronald Robert Campbell's biography of his father, Non-Resident Secretary (1874-1907) James Duncan Campbell, *James Duncan Campbell: A Memoir by his Son* (Cambridge MA, 1970). Campbell claimed that whereas Hart hungrily sought praise and publicity for his achievements, his father 'never claimed any credit or recognition, but effaced himself with the loyalty of his Highland blood' (p. xvi).

[81] Chen Xiafei in *Archives of China's Imperial Maritime Customs*, p. xii.

[82] Katherine F. Bruner, John K. Fairbank and Richard J. Smith (eds.), *Robert Hart and China's Modernization: His Journals, 1863-1866* (Cambridge MA, 1991), pp. 327-28 and p. 398. For Hart's role as adviser to the Qing state see Jonathon D. Spence, *To Change China: Western Advisers in China* (New York, 1969), Chapter Four, 'Lay and Hart: Power, Patronage, Pay', pp. 93-128.

[83] Horowitz, 'Politics, Power and the Chinese Maritime Customs', p. 551. In this collection of articles also see Richard O'Leary, 'Robert Hart in China: The Significance of his Irish Roots', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2006), pp. 538-604.

Hart's and Gustav Detring's political roles during the Boxer Rising of 1899-1901, has added an extra layer of complexity to our understanding of Hart's political dealings.[84]

Hart was, of course, not alone in his influential position as advisor to the Qing state. There existed a long line of precedents to Hart's role in China; foreign experts had been employed since the 1620s to advise the Chinese state on matters technological and astronomical.[85] Foreign military advisors and leaders were frequently enlisted by the Chinese state, by rebel insurgents and by dissenting warlords in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; these adventurers and freebooters ranged in status from, at the upper end of the scale, the Briton Charles Gordon who led the Ever Victorious Army against Taiping forces in the 1860s and British-born Morris 'Two-Gun' Cohen, bodyguard to Sun Yat-sen and general in the Chinese army in the 1920s and 1930s, to, at the other end of the spectrum, opportunist mercenaries.[86] Some individuals assumed a more political role, including the Australian-born journalist G. E. Morrison who became advisor to Yuan Shih-kai during the Xinhai Revolution.[87] The Nationalist government, moreover, was particularly keen to employ foreign experts in an advisory capacity; the services of a series of German military, political and economic consultants were enlisted during the Nanjing decade and American economist Arthur Young held the position of financial advisor to the Chinese government and the Central Bank of China 1929-46.[88] Foreign journalists, too, were sometimes assigned an advisory role by the Nationalist government; Australian journalist William Donald worked as a political advisor in China in the late 1930s and American journalist G. E. Sokolsky was employed as a publicist for the Guomindang at the same time as he was feeding US government officials information

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[84] Hans van de Ven, 'Robert Hart and Gustav Detring during the Boxer Rebellion', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2006), pp. 631-62. Van de Ven argues that Hart occupied a key position in an 'international network' of businessmen, diplomats and journalists whose dealings with China rested on frequently shifting alliances with Chinese officials.

[85] Jesuit missionary Adam Schall, for example, was appointed director of the Bureau of Astronomy in 1644 and his successor, Ferdinand Verbiest, also advised the Chinese court on astronomical matters after arriving in China in 1656. See Spence, *To Change China,* Chapter One, 'Schall and Verbiest: To God Through the Stars', pp. 3-33.

[86] For an account of Gordon's experiences in the Ever Victorious Army see Spence, *To Change China*, Chapter Three, 'Ward and Gordon: Glorious Days of Looting', pp. 57-92. On Cohen see Daniel S. Levy, *Two-Gun Cohen: A Biography* (New York, 1997).

[87] On Morrison see Eiko Woodhouse, *The Chinese Hsinhai Revolution: G. E. Morrison and Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1897-1920* (London, 2004) and Cyril Pearl, *Morrison of Peking: Explorer, Foreign Correspondent, Political Adviser and one of the makers of the Chinese Republic* (Middlesex, 1970).

[88] On Germany's relationship with the Nationalist government see Kirby, *Germany and Republican China.*

about the inner workings of the Chinese government.[89] Others, such as W.A.P. Martin, director of the Tongwenguan in the 1860s, set their sights on educational reform.[90] This by no means exhaustive list of foreign reformers, consultants and adventurers who made careers working for the Chinese state shows that Hart had many companions in his position as advisor to the Chinese government. Hart was, however, anomalous in respect to the very long length of his period of influence in Chinese politics; whereas most other foreign advisors relinquished their posts and returned home after a few years Hart stayed in office from 1863 until 1908. His successors as IG, moreover, would ensure that the Foreign Inspectorate's influence in political matters endured until 1949.

Although revised and more nuanced interpretations of the Hart era are emerging, the Customs administration of Republican China remains woefully understudied. The Aglen Inspectorate (1911-27), in particular, has been neglected—with the exception of studies of very specific incidents such as Aglen's dismissal and the ensuing IG succession crisis.[91] Charged with responsibility for the Customs administration in the politically chaotic post-revolution era, Hart's successor Francis Aglen pushed the boundaries of the Service's responsibilities even further forward by assuming direct control of banking the Customs revenue for the first time, in the process earmarking a portion of the Customs revenue for repayment of foreign loans and the Boxer Indemnity.[92] This proved an unwise move in the long run, laying the Foreign

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[89] On Donald see E. A. Selle, *Donald of China* (Sydney, 1948). On Sokolsky see Warren I. Cohen, *The Chinese Connection: Roger S. Greene, Thomas W. Lamont, George E. Sokolsky, and American-Far East Relations* (New York, 1978) and Bryna Goodman, 'Semi-Colonialism, Transnational Networks and News Flows in Early Republican Shanghai', *The China Review*, vol. 1, no. 4 (2004).

[90] On Martin's career in China see Spence, *To Change China*, Chapter Five, 'Martin and Fryer: Trimming the Lamps', pp. 129-60. On Martin and the Tongwenguan also see Knight Biggerstaff, *The Earliest Modern Government Schools in China* (Ithaca NY, 1961).

[91] See, for example: Eugene Byrne, 'The Dismissal of Sir Francis Aglen as Inspector General of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service, 1927', *Leeds East Asia Papers*, no. 30 (1995); Atkins, *Informal Empire in Crisis;* Jean Aitchison, 'The Chinese Maritime Customs Service in the Transition from the Ch'ing to the Nationalist Era: An Examination of the Relationship between a Western-style Fiscal Institution and the Chinese Government in the Period before the Manchurian Incident' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1981). For an account of the succession of Robert Hart see Lau Kit-ching Chan, 'The Succession of Sir Robert Hart at the Imperial Maritime Customs Service', *Journal of Asian History*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1975), pp. 1-34.

[92] Previously the Chinese Superintendent and his staff in each port had been responsible for supervising the actual collection and banking of customs duties. During the breakdown of central authority during the 1911 revolution Commissioners in the provinces which had declared their independence from Peking assumed control of the revenue and placed it in foreign banks. In 1912 the new republican government was forced to accept an agreement with the treaty powers giving the Inspector General control of the revenue, which

Inspectorate open to attack from anti-imperialist campaigners in 1920s China. Inspectorate-commissioned histories have deliberately avoided this period in Customs history, perhaps because the Inspectorate's more explicit collusion with imperialism after 1912 raised difficult questions about the authenticity of its proclamations of commitment to disinterestedly serving China's interests.

Come 1927 Aglen found himself dismissed by the Peking government and, after a lengthy succession battle, succeeded as IG by Frederick Maze.[93] It was during Maze's time as IG (1929-41) that the Foreign Inspectorate saw its position in China change most dramatically. The Guomindang's centralising vision of government and anti-imperialist agenda saw the Inspectorate lose a great deal of its autonomy as its activities were drawn closer under the watchful eye of the Guanwushu, the supervisory board under whose jurisdiction the Customs operated after 1928. Few studies of the Maze era have been undertaken and those which do exist tend to accept Maze's side of the story.[94] Nicholas Clifford's case study of Maze's political manoeuvrings in wartime Shanghai, for example, buttresses Maze's own defence of his actions, arguing that 'first and uppermost in his mind was the maintenance of the integrity of the Service'.[95] Similarly, Donna Brunero's recent book, *Britain's Imperial Cornerstone in China*, the first English-language survey of the entire Customs period with a focus on the Maze era, is a much-needed addition to the body of Customs literature, yet suffers from a heavy reliance on Maze's papers as source material.[96]

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would be held in foreign banks, in order to ensure that foreign loans and the Boxer Indemnity were repaid from the Customs revenue. See Albert Feuerwerker, *The Foreign Establishment in China in the Twentieth Century*, (Ann Arbor MI, 1976), p.65. For the earlier involvement of the Customs in securing and repaying foreign loans see King, 'The Boxer Indemnity'.

[93] See Atkins, *Informal Empire in Crisis.*

[94] His biographer in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* also accepts Maze's side of the story. Robert Sharp, 'Maze, Sir Frederick William (1871-1959)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds.), (Oxford, 2004).

[95] Nicholas Clifford, 'Sir Frederick Maze and the Chinese Maritime Customs, 1937-41', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 37, no. 1 (1965), p. 21. Martyn Atkins, too, is remarkably sympathetic to Maze, applauding how 'in returning to the principles which had guided Sir Robert Hart in his service of China, Maze removed prejudice and fear from both sides in the Customs' factional interests'. Atkins, *Informal Empire in Crisis*, p. 106. See Bickers, 'Purloined Letters', for an alternative view of Maze's motives.

[96] Brunero, *Britain's Imperial Cornerstone in China*. Also see Brunero's survey of the Nationalist era Customs, 'Through Turbulent Waters: Foreign Administration of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service, 1923-1937' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 2000). The standard overview of the Foreign Inspectorate's history in Chinese is Chen Shiqi, *Zhongguo jindai haiguan shi* (History of the modern Chinese Customs) (Beijing, 2002).

Japanese aggression in China, moreover, beginning with the occupation of Manchuria in 1931 and culminating in the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45 saw the Customs face its biggest challenge to date, one which would have severe consequences for the future of the Inspectorate.[97] During 1932 the Manchurian Customs stations one by one dropped outside the Inspectorate's sphere of authority. The outbreak of the Asia Pacific War, moreover, saw the takeover of the Shanghai Inspectorate by the collaborationist Wang Jingwei government in December 1941, which thereafter continued to operate with former Chief Secretary Kishimoto Hirokichi in the top position—the first non-British IG in the Customs' history—until 1945.[98] In response to the 'bogus' Customs regime, a rival Customs establishment was created from scratch in the wartime capital of Chongqing in January 1942. The two Customs Services operated simultaneously until the end of the war.[99] In 1945 the last foreign IG, Lester Knox Little (IG 1943-50), found himself in charge of a depleted Customs staff working for a financially-drained government engaged in a full-blown civil war with the Communist Party. The Customs had weathered many political storms but it could not survive this one; after almost a century of existence the CCP's triumph in 1949 inevitably brought with it the Foreign Inspectorate's end.

Much more work focusing on the changing position and the complex allegiances of the Customs after 1911 remains to be done. In view of the numerous challenges faced by the Customs in the Republican era, in the form of burgeoning anti-imperialist sentiment, the sinifying and centralising policies of the Guomindang government, and the very difficult conditions created by the Sino-Japanese War, study of this period makes for a Customs history which is potentially much richer and more absorbing than that of the nineteenth-century period of expansion. Another conspicuous gap in Customs historiography is the lack of material on its lower-level staff. Although prominent and

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[97] For a discussion of Maze's efforts to preserve Customs integrity during the first years of the Sino-Japanese War see Clifford, 'Sir Frederick Maze and the Chinese Maritime Customs'.

[98] In 1898, as part of the negotiations following the Sino-Japanese War, the British government extracted an assurance that the post of Inspector General would be occupied by a British subject for as long as British trade predominated in China. This agreement stood until the Sino-British Friendship Treaty of 1943 dismantled the props of British imperialism in China.

[99] For an account of the wartime Inspectorates see Robert Bickers, 'The American IG: L. K. Little and the end of the Foreign Inspectorate, 1943-50', unpublished paper presented at the Association for Asian Studies annual meeting, San Francisco, 6-9 April 2006.

influential personalities in the Customs such as Hart have been the subject of much scholarly attention, the thousands of subordinate employees who were at the forefront of the Customs' everyday operations have only received cursory mention. This thesis aims to redress this imbalance by providing a comprehensive study of the lives and careers of the foreign staff at all levels of the Customs hierarchy. Moreover, although this study will provide a general survey of the development of a foreign cadre of Customs staff throughout the entire period of the Foreign Inspectorate's existence, special attention will be paid to the changing role and position of the foreign staff in the face of increasing political challenges in the 1920s and 1930s.

Until the year 1918 the foreign contingent always dominated in the Customs staff and remained a strong force until the final years of the Inspectorate.[100] Despite Hart's insistence that his foreign personnel should consider themselves 'the countrymen' of their Chinese colleagues, higher-ranking and more financially-rewarding positions were reserved for foreigners until the latter decades of the Foreign Inspectorate's existence.[101] The Inspectorate always employed a large body of subordinate Chinese staff, who held low-ranking and menial positions in the Customs—as, for example, sentries and messengers—and who are not recorded in the service lists, yet in the service-listed ranks—those positions offering the prospect of an enduring career—foreigners far outnumbered Chinese employees until the twentieth century. On 31 December 1880, almost three decades after the Foreign Inspectorate's formation, only 262 service-listed Chinese are recorded as working for the Service as compared with 524 foreigners. By 31 December 1920 Chinese staff numbers had overtaken those of foreign nationals—1,581 Chinese are recorded as being employed by the Customs on this date as compared with 1,422 foreigners—yet in terms of career prospects and pay Chinese employees were still at a disadvantage.[102] It was not until the Nationalist government came to power in 1927,

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[100] In 1918 service-listed Chinese staff numbers overtook those of the foreign staff for the first time; the total number of Chinese recorded as being employed by the Service between 1 January 1918 and 31 December was 1,408 and the total number of foreigners was 1,363. Figures derived from service lists database of employees withdrawn from service.

[101] *Documents Illustrative,* vol. I, circular no. 8 of 1864 (first series), 'The Customs Service, the spirit that ought to animate it, the policy that ought to guide it, the duties it ought to perform', p. 36. In this passage Hart was emphasising the difference between Customs men, who had 'accepted certain obligations and responsibilities' in becoming Chinese government employees, and other foreigners in China.

[102] Figures derived from service lists database of employees withdrawn from service.

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suspending foreign recruitment (with the exception of technical experts employed on contract) and inaugurating a policy of accelerated promotion for Chinese employees, that Chinese staff began to rise to the highest-ranking positions in significant numbers.[103]

[103] Although foreign recruitment was suspended in 1927 and officially abolished in 1929, significant numbers of foreign nationals continued to be recruited on a contract basis until the Foreign Inspectorate's end. This did, however, signal the end of a secure and long-term career with benefits for foreigners joining the Service after 1927.

4) Customs lives and careers

This thesis, then, is concerned with both the formation and profile of the foreign staff as a cadre of specialised employees and the moulding of Customs men as individuals. As a group of men who shared a certain position in China as Chinese government employees the foreign staff were expected to espouse Customs principles and exhibit a steadfast commitment to their service. This study, however, aims to challenge the Customs' construction of itself as a 'cosmopolitan league working for the welfare and advancement of the Chinese people'.[104] Customs multinationalism rarely was entirely harmonious, and not all nationalities had an equal stake in the Customs. Neither did the body of foreign staff always present a unified front in purpose and practice. During the course of their careers Customs men were influenced and inspired by a range of concerns and affiliations. National loyalties, socio-economic origins, the local conditions at particular postings, family concerns and personal predicaments are just some of the variables which shaped the individual experience of working in the Customs. A key concern of this thesis, then, will be the extent to which Inspectorate attempts to mould its employees to fit a specific vision of the foreign staff were undermined by competing national and personal loyalties and status divisions. I will argue that, rather than presenting a model of cosmopolitan harmony, the Customs experienced latent tensions precisely because of the diverse national and socio-economic composition of its staff.

I will take a 'life cycle' approach to the foreign staff, mapping typical life and career trajectories from pre-Customs lives, through the experience of living and working in China, to the end of a career and life beyond the Customs. Sketching a picture of the everyday working, social and private worlds of foreign Customs personnel will, I hope, highlight the essential ordinariness of life and work in China, and in the wider empire world, in addition to the occasional moments of adventure which intruded upon an otherwise mundane existence. Although each chapter takes a wide-ranging chronological and methodological approach to Customs lives and careers, I also aim to underscore the broad processes of political and social change and continuity, both in China and

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[104] Wright, *Origins and Development*, p. 4.

internationally, which altered or sometimes transformed the context in which the Foreign Inspectorate and its staff worked. Certain episodes of national or international crisis and upheaval and their impact upon the Customs working world will be examined in more detail, particularly the Nationalist takeover in the late-1920s and the subsequent curtailment of the Inspectorate's autonomy and erosion of 'foreign prestige' in the Service. Whereas most Western histories of the Customs to date have unavoidably relied upon diplomatic archives, published memoirs and documents, and the personal papers of Customs personnel, this study draws heavily on correspondence and personnel files contained in the Customs Service archive, held in the Second Historical Archive of China, which was until recently inaccessible to many Western researchers.[105]

Chapter One begins by exploring the recruitment experiences of Customs candidates and the personal and professional qualities sought by the Inspectorate in new recruits, using correspondence between the IGs and their Non-Resident Secretaries in London. A particular focus will be the divergent recruitment experiences of men joining the Indoor and 'outdoor' branches, and what this tells us about their place in the wider treaty port world. This chapter is especially concerned with expectations, both the expectations the Inspectorate held of its employees and the expectations new recruits harboured of China and their future careers. A second concern in this chapter is to build a socio-economic profile of the foreign staff using samples of application forms of candidates to the Customs. The overarching agenda of Chapter One is to reassess conventional images of the type of person who sought work or adventure in China and the wider empire world. I argue that European workers in empire usually had much more prosaic reasons for choosing overseas employment than a single-minded commitment to imperialism. I also aim to highlight the vast national and socio-economic spectrum of people for whom China and the empire world spoke of opportunity.

Chapter Two turns to the everyday working worlds of the Customs foreign staff. Using confidential and semi-official correspondence between port Commissioners and senior Inspectorate Staff, handing-over-charge memoranda, and the memoirs of Customs men this chapter aims to build a picture of the typical working environment of a custom

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[105] Until recently no English-language catalogue of the Customs Service Archive was available. The task of re-cataloguing in digital format, using original file titles, was undertaken through a collaboration between British historians and the staff of the Second Historical Archives in 2002-04.

house and its attendant challenges, be they working under trying wartime conditions or else simply enduring the monotony of work in a small port. Questions of the extent to which new recruits were socialised into a specific Service ethos, and the broader issue of how national or imperial loyalties could be fragmented or supplanted by specific Service identities are a key concern here. This chapter also sheds more light on the intricacies of the foreign presence—particularly in the local, small port context— examining everyday interactions between foreign Customs men and Chinese colleagues, local communities and officials, in addition to exploring the tensions and divisions within the foreign staff. Chapter Three adopts a more focused gaze, concentrating on issues of conduct, discipline and reward. Using Inspectorate circulars cautioning staff about engaging in misconduct and malpractice I examine the Service's construction of itself as a model of honesty, and its growing anxieties about the potential for misconduct to de-legitimise the Inspectorate's entire existence. Using reports on malpractice and misconduct cases and examining patterns of dismissals from the Service I also assess the real nature and volume of misconduct amongst the foreign ranks. More broadly, this chapter aims to illuminate the personal triumphs and disasters which characterised colonial careers.

Chapter Four turns to the social and private lives of the foreign staff. In particular, I am concerned here with the Inspectorate's preoccupation with preserving its good reputation and how it sought to police the social and private behaviour of its employees. Using memoirs of Customs employees, confidential correspondence dealing with their social and personal 'transgressions'—as the Inspectorate saw them— and correspondence concerning Customs-specific social spaces, I identify two overlapping social cultures in which Customs men took part; the distinct Customs social world, as cultivated by Customs clubs and camaraderie, and the recreational activities offered by the wider treaty port foreign world. The Customs man's place within treaty port foreign society was sometimes ambiguous, and this chapter explores their status more fully. More broadly, this chapter aims to augment work on the importance of reputation in the colonial world, and the threat posed to 'white prestige' by individuals who did not conform to the right standards.[106] Chapter Six concludes the thesis by turning to the endpoint of a Customs

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[106] See, for example, Kristen McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Capetown, 1820-50* (Melbourne, 2004). Also, Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power.*

career. Using a range of different series of Customs correspondence and the papers of the last foreign IG, L. K. Little, I explore common reasons for leaving the Service and the post-Customs destinations and careers of foreign employees. Incidents of mass dismissals are also a key concern here—particularly the expulsion of all Germans and Austrians from the Customs in August 1917 and the dismissal of all British and American employees in December 1941—with a focus on how unexpected and untimely discharge from the Service affected the lives of the individuals concerned. Overall, this chapter aims to place the experiences of the foreign staff in the wider perspective of migrations, relocations and dislocations in the empire world, hoping to reach some tentative conclusions about the lasting effect of empire careers on individual loyalties and national identities.

Above all I am concerned with illuminating the *experience* of working for the Customs. I do so with the expansive aim of reaching an understanding of what it meant to live and work in China and in the wider empire world. More broadly I hope to shed light on the personal and political ramifications of working within a different state's administration, providing a framework which can be used to study the staff of other institutions of a similar status to the Customs, such as the Egyptian customs service. Although essentially a case study, exploration of the lives and careers of the Customs foreign staff has much broader implications for work on the foreign presence in China and on settlement and work in the wider non-European world. In particular, it can provide further answers to the question of what type of opportunities the British empire and its outposts presented to Western men and women and the reasons they took these opportunities. Choosing to live and work in China was, as we shall see, not such an extraordinary step. China, the Customs and the wider empire world were by turns mundane and exotic, and were populated by very ordinary people.

Chapter One

Expectations and Beginnings: Joining the Customs

In 1905 a twenty-four year-old Norwegian, Albert Henry Rasmussen, was appointed to the Outdoor Staff of the Customs as a Watcher, joining the small but steadily growing cohort of sixty-four Norwegians in the Service. Lately arrived in China after working on a Norwegian merchant ship carrying coal to Hong Kong, he suddenly found himself jobless in an unknown land. Rasmussen was, however, unperturbed. Ever resourceful and ambitious, he decided that China was the country where he would make his fortune. According to the old China hands he met in Hong Kong, Shanghai, the city which featured most vividly in the international imagination as the gateway to wealth and opportunity for a 'white' man in China, was the place to be in order to make his mark. Consequently, after being paid off by his ship Rasmussen travelled up the China coast and managed to procure a letter of introduction to the Chief Tidesurveyor, head of the Customs Outdoor Staff in Shanghai, from a Swedish missionary. His meeting with the Tidesurveyor was brief and successful and a few months later Rasmussen was promoted to the rank of Tidewaiter and transferred to the small Yangzi port of Zhenjiang (Chinkiang) in eastern China, where he remained for the rest of his Service career. The Customs Outdoor Staff, however, was not strictly what Rasmussen had in mind when he spoke of his intention to 'to stay and make a future for myself' in China.[1] In fact, he professed to have 'joined from dire necessity' and had no desire to remain an Outdoor man, who were assigned a place near the bottom of treaty port social hierarchies, for longer than was expedient.[2] For Rasmussen, the Customs was merely a convenient stopgap on the road to more promising ventures.

The recruitment experiences of Rasmussen's colleagues in the Indoor Staff would have been very different. The Indoor Staff was prized by the Inspectorate as the *corps d'élite* of the Service, which would secure the Customs' international reputation and high-standing amongst other overseas services, and so considerably more care was taken when selecting Indoor appointees. Recruiting suitable foreign staff for *all* branches was, however, never an easy business, and was complicated

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[1] Rasmussen, *China Trader*, p. 42 and p. 17.
[2] Rasmussen, *China Trader*, p. 3.

from the start by the Service's unusual position in the empire world. Unlike colonial civil services, which were ultimately accountable to Whitehall, Customs recruits were entering into employment in a Chinese government service and were answerable to the Inspectorate in Peking. Orchestrating the recruitment of foreign employees from a headquarters in China was problematic from the beginning, although the establishment of the Customs London Office in 1874 alleviated this difficulty somewhat. Furthermore, the Service's administrative counterparts elsewhere in the empire world, as *colonial* services allied to British interests, did not have to contend with the conflicts and inconveniences which came with recruiting a multinational staff. The Customs, moreover, competed for personnel with more orthodox and well-known overseas services, such as the ICS and Colonial Services, which were often considered safer options than working for the Chinese government. Further recruitment difficulties accompanied the expansion of the Service and its duties. The permanent establishment of the Marine Department in 1881 and the Works Department in 1912 required that a more technically specialised foreign staff—who were, moreover, willing to relocate to China—be found.

This chapter examines these recruitment dilemmas and how the Inspectorate attempted to overcome them. The strategies and processes used to locate and select potential candidates shed much light on the *type* of person sought by the Customs, and the personal and professional qualities that the Inspectorate believed endowed a candidate with the potential to become a model Customs man. A second major concern of this chapter is to trace the socio-economic backgrounds of Customs recruits. Placing candidates in the context of their pre-Customs lives brings to light some of the motivations of these men in joining the Service and the expectations they harboured of their future careers, and of China. In particular, the different recruitment experiences and disparate socio-economic backgrounds encountered by recruits to, on the one hand, the Indoor Staff and, on the other hand, the 'outdoor' branches, are telling of exactly what the Customs offered each cadre of men.

1) The politics of nationality and Customs recruitment

Cosmopolitanism was the lynchpin around which the Service's image was constructed and Hart had pledged from the beginning to secure a fair representation of all nationalities with trading interests in China amongst his foreign personnel. Customs multinationalism would, moreover, secure the Customs' legacy as a ground-breaking bureaucratic force promoting cosmopolitan harmony. Customs historian Stanley Wright's attempts to do just this were self-evident in his history of the Service:

> In the cosmopolitan nature of its staff, in the range of its interests, and in its ideals of public service, the Customs Service has not inaptly been termed a precursor of the League of Nations, functioning, it is true, only in China and as a Chinese institution, but none the less a cosmopolitan league working for the welfare and advancement of the Chinese people.[3]

In practice, of course, maintaining the national equilibrium in the foreign staff proved a difficult balance to strike. For one, the overwhelming British bias in the staff was a recurrent cause of chagrin for other foreign powers; approximately 5,400 of the 11,000 foreign nationals recorded as working for the Service over the course of its existence were British (*table 1.1*). As early as 1869 Hart recognised the tensions and difficulties caused by British dominance in the staff:

> The Service is a Chinese Service: but it has cosmopolitan work to do, and existing conditions make it expedient that the composition of the Service should be cosmopolitan too. The circumstances under which it grew up tended naturally to fill its ranks with Englishmen; their present number—while still even below what it ought to be, were the proportion which British bears to other trade in China, alone considered,—continues to render it excessively difficult to be at once just to old employees and satisfy the requirements of other nationalities.[4]

As *tables 1.1* and *1.2* show, the British contingent dominated in the beginning and remained strong until the very end—with the exception of the period of Japanese control of the Inspectorate, 1941-45. Furthermore, in 1898 Britain extracted rights to exclusive occupation of the post of IG for as long as British trade preponderated in China. The IG's rhetoric of cosmopolitanism, then, was clearly difficult to square with the realities of British trading and political predominance in China.

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[3] Wright, *Origins and Development*, p. 4.
[4] *Documents Illustrative*, vol. I, circular no. 26 of 1869 (first series), 'Service Re-organization', p. 174.

Table 1.1- **Key nationalities recorded as working in the Customs staff on 1 January at five yearly intervals (percentage of the entire foreign staff in parentheses).**

nationality/ date	American	British	Danish	French	German	Italian	Japanese	Norwegian	Russian		Total foreign staff	Chinese staff
1 Jan 1855	1 (25)	3 (75)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		4	1
1 Jan 1860	9 (10.8)	49 (59)	0	1 (1.2)	2 (2.4)	0	0	0	0		83	12
1 Jan 1865	50 (15.7)	203 (64)	6 (1.9)	9 (2.8)	19 (6)	1 (0.3)	0	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)		317	69
1 Jan 1870	53 (13.2)	235 (58.3)	9 (2.2)	28 (6.9)	40 (9.9)	1 (0.2)	0	4 (1)	4 (1)		403	98
1 Jan 1875	50 (11.1)	284 (63.3)	8 (1.8)	28 (6.2)	35 (7.8)	2 (0.4)	0	2 (0.4)	1 (0.2)		449	181
1 Jan 1880	50 (9.9)	307 (61)	12 (2.4)	29 (5.8)	47 (9.3)	3 (0.6)	0	3 (0.6)	2 (0.4)		503	251
1 Jan 1885	46 (8.3)	354 (60)	17 (2.9)	31 (5.2)	76 (12.9)	8 (1.4)	0	4 (0.7)	3 (0.5)		591	284
1 Jan 1890	56 (7.4)	446 (59.5)	23 (3.1)	29 (3.9)	96 (12.7)	12 (1.6)	0	16 (2.1)	4 (0.5)		753	394
1 Jan 1895	53 (6.8)	460 (58.6)	28 (3.6)	34 (4.3)	95 (12.1)	10 (1.35)	0	18 (2.3)	6 (0.8)		785	437
1 Jan 1900	86 (8.1)	574 (54.3)	31 (2.9)	57 (5.4)	133 (12.6)	13 (1.2)	4 (0.4)	36 (3.4)	10 (0.9)		1,057	675
1 Jan 1905	96 (7.6)	664 (52.3)	46 (3.6)	62 (4.9)	156 (12.3)	23 (1.8)	15 (1.2)	50 (3.9)	15 (1.2)		1,269	1,285
1 Jan 1910	68 (4.9)	691 (49.5)	46 (3.3)	72 (5.2)	171 (12.2)	32 (1.3)	77 (5.5)	64 (4.6)	48 (3.4)		1,396	1,244
1 Jan 1915	72 (4.9)	736 (50.2)	59 (4)	39 (2.7)	142 (9.7)	33 (2.3)	102 (7)	57 (3.9)	78 (5.3)		1,466	1,303
1 Jan 1920	81 (6.1)	681 (51)	50 (3.7)	27 (2.4)	0	29 (2.2)	199 (14.9)	47 (3.5)	68 (5.1)		1,336	1,443
1 Jan 1925	86 (5.9)	772 (53.1)	46 (3.2)	22 (1.5)	0	28 (1.9)	216 (14.9)	30 (2.1)	83 (5.7)		1,454	1,952
1 Jan 1930	76 (5.9)	662 (51.8)	32 (2.5)	21 (1.6)	0	29 (2.3)	212 (16.6)	26 (2)	76 (5.9)		1,278	2,393
1 Jan 1935	74 (6.8)	688 (62.8)	29 (2.)	10 (0.9)	0	24 (2.2)	75 (6.8)	28 (2.6)	60 (5.5)		1,096	3,062
1 Jan 1940	70 (5.1)	559 (40.5)	22 (1.6)	7 (0.5)	0	17 (1.2)	538 (40)	25 (1.1)	46 (3.3)		1,380	3,766
1 Jan 1945	14 (1)	206 (15.3)	15 (1.1)	2 (0.1)	0	1	1,001 (74.5)	9 (0.7)	32 (2.4)		1,344	4,035
1 Jan 1949	7 (2.3)	208 (69.1)	12 (4)	0	0	3 (1)	0	12 (4)	10 (3.3)		301	4,646
Total number employed by the Customs 1854-1950												
	984	***5,408***	***268***	***251***	***775***	***125***	***1495***	***293***	***361***		***11,000***	***11,272***

Source- Service lists database of employees withdrawn from service

Table 1.2 – **Number of appointments of key nationalities to the Customs Service (figures calculated for five-year periods)**

nationality/date	American	British	Chinese	Danish	French	German	Italian	Japanese	Norwegian	Russian	Total staff appointed
1 Jan 1855- 31 Dec 1859	9	56	10	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	128
1 Jan 1860- 31 Dec 1864	105	406	58	10	12	32	0	0	2	1	716
1 Jan 1865- 31 Dec 1869	42	163	29	4	29	36	2	0	4	5	338
1 Jan 1870- 31 Dec 1874	21	173	77	5	7	22	1	0	0	1	336
1 Jan 1875- 31 Dec 1879	32	234	99	14	14	34	4	0	3	5	494
1 Jan 1880- 31 Dec 1884	31	208	106	13	9	64	7	0	9	6	490
1 Jan 1885- 31 Dec 1889	41	270	235	14	8	61	6	0	17	2	704
1 Jan 1890- 31 Dec 1894	43	280	184	13	16	42	2	0	15	6	653
1 Jan 1895- 31 Dec 1899	127	536	428	25	43	131	6	4	42	16	1,484
1 Jan 1900- 31 Dec 1904	143	563	1,059	43	32	118	20	11	54	19	2,284
1 Jan 1905- 31 Dec 1909	80	592	1,191	24	29	104	20	74	49	51	2,296
1 Jan 1910- 31 Dec 1914	65	545	472	36	24	116	7	41	28	82	1,498
1 Jan 1915- 31 Dec 1919	80	312	378	20	2	11	12	138	21	43	1,105
1 Jan 1920- 31 Dec 1924	81	494	857	22	15	0	15	72	9	78	1,722
1 Jan 1925- 31 Dec 1929	32	161	899	6	6	0	9	35	10	22	1,196
1 Jan 1930- 31 Dec 1934	25	193	1,294	7	0	0	4	19	12	12	1,589
1 Jan 1935- 31 Dec 1939	8	28	1,183	3	1	1	2	498	7	3	1,739
1 Jan 1940- 31 Dec 1944	4	3	1,193	1	0	0	1	602	1	6	1,818
1 Jan 1945-31 Dec 1949	5	82	1,511	8	1	0	7	0	10	3	1,649

Source- Service lists database of employees withdrawn from Service

Whereas Hart admitted that British dominance in the staff sat uncomfortably with his self-professed aim of constructing a cosmopolitan service, his successor, Aglen, was not so shy of exhibiting his commitment to furthering British interests in China through the Customs. A case in point is Aglen's response to the French minister to China's attempts to press for increased French representation in the Customs in 1913. In an indignant letter to the British minister in Peking, Sir John Jordan, the IG surmised that 'he wants to reduce the British interest in the Service to the same dimension as that of the other big powers and above all to eliminate all that is distinctively British or that gives a distinctively British tone to the administration.'[5] The Foreign Office reassured Aglen of the 'great importance that we attach to maintaining the British position in this Service' and avowed 'to resist by all means in our power any change of this kind in the Customs Service.'[6] Aglen's determination to keep the Service British and his readiness to make recourse to British authority when British Customs interests were threatened belied the Inspectorate's talk of disinterested service of China.

Certain other nationalities did, however, also maintain a steady presence in the staff. In the first two decades after the Inspectorate's formation the Americans looked set to become Britain's strongest rivals in the Customs, until numbers of German appointments overtook those allocated to the Americans in the late 1870s (*table 1.2*).[7] Norwegians and Danes also upheld a small but consistent presence in the foreign staff, despite their countries' lack of obvious economic or territorial ambitions in China. The late nineteenth century saw a growing assortment of nationalities enter the Customs staff and steadily increase their numbers. Much to Hart's annoyance, more and more countries vying for a stake in the China market began to realise that national representation in the Customs could help to further their economic interests.

In manoeuvring and mediating between the various and often conflicting national interests in the Customs Hart found the London Office was a valuable tool.

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[5] The National Archives (TNA), London, FO371/1629, Aglen to Jordan, October 1913, pp. 141-6. Yet, despite his blustering, Aglen believed that the French minister's protest would 'end in failure, because I cannot imagine it possible that the British Government would for a moment tolerate such an attack on its unequalled position in regard to the Customs.'

[6] TNA, London, FO371/1629, Foreign Office telegram from Sir Edward Grey, London, to Sir F. Bertie, Peking, 3 November, 1913, p.147.

[7] The American contingent was popular with Hart, who commented in 1888 that 'the Americans are on the whole the most serious: others work and do their day's work well enough for their day's pay, but the Americans show an interest in their work and take hold of a detail in such a way as to show they know its position in relation to the whole –and this is a very satisfactory attitude to find one's staff in!' *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, Z/341, 20 May 1888, p. 704.

By channelling almost all Indoor Staff recruitment through London the IG could respond to requests for national representation whilst evading pressure from ministers in Peking to appoint their own nominees. In response to pressure from the Russian government Hart instructed Campbell to appoint three Russian Assistants in 1880. 'Russia begins to notice that there are many Russian merchants and no Russian Customs' employés, and I must get out of the difficulty this is preparing for me *before the trap snaps: so, look alive,'* he urged, adding that he did not want Campbell to accept candidates nominated by the Russian minister.[8] More than two decades later the London Office was still proving a useful means of avoiding ministerial pressures. In a 1904 letter about German and Austrian recruitment, Hart reminded Campbell to be quick in finding suitable candidates. 'I prefer the men we select, and, without them, have to take Legation candidates when the "balance of power" demands attention', he explained.[9] Whilst recognising the need to appease various foreign powers in China, Hart was adamant that Service vacancies would not be filled with men who would become political pawns of their ministers.

The politics of nationality in the Customs staff was rendered an increasingly thorny problem by the growing territorial and economic ambitions of foreign powers—notably Russia, Germany, France and Japan—in the late 1890s. The Sino-Japanese War (1894-5) and the ensuing 'scramble for concessions' (1897-8) saw China carved up into 'spheres of influence' and a corresponding clamouring for increased representation in the foreign staff. Those countries which succeeded in extracting the most concessions from China also did well in the Customs staff. Japan's entry onto the imperial scene in China, with her victory in the Sino-Japanese War and subsequent annexation of Taiwan and the Pescadores, resulted in the first wave of Japanese recruitment to the Service in the late 1890s.[10] Russia, previously a minor player in the Customs, succeeded in steadily increasing her representation in the Customs after extracting the leasehold of Port Arthur on the Liaotung Penisula. Other nations who already enjoyed prominence in the Customs staff fortified their positions after gaining a firmer stronghold on China during the 'scramble for concessions'. Germany, for example, after seizing Jiaozhou Bay in 1897 and

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[8] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, letter A/26, 14 December 1880, p. 351.
[9] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 2, letter Z/1346, 9 October 1904, p. 1431.
[10] See Peter Duus, 'Introduction: Japan's Informal Empire in China, 1895-1937', in Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie (eds.), *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895-1937* (Princeton NJ, 1989), pp. xix-xxiv.

annexing Shandong province as a sphere of influence ensured that her representation in the foreign staff did not dip below twelve per cent until the outbreak of the First World War (*table 1.1*).[11] In 1899 Hart wearily complained that, 'the Japs have not followed up their attack yet, but the Americans have asked for more men and the Russians reminded me that I am expected to go on adding. The result is we are over-manned.'[12] Hart was not exaggerating; in the period 1895-99 the number of foreign Customs appointments shot up to 1,050, as compared with 469 in the preceding five years (*table1. 2*).

Although the Customs had claimed to be a multinational service from its inception, it was only in response to the political pressures and new international climate of the late nineteenth century that its staff profile became truly cosmopolitan. In 1905 Hart foresaw the recruitment problems that the twentieth century would bring, complaining that 'it is a nuisance having to take into consideration the claims of so many flags, and whoever comes after me will find it more embarrassing than it is in my time.'[13] His prophesy was fulfilled; in the period 1900-10 over twenty-two different nationalities were present in the Customs staff, compared with only seven in the 1850s and sixteen in the 1890s.

The suspension of foreign recruitment in 1927 and its official termination in 1929—except for those technical experts recruited on a contract basis—meant that by the time of Maze's appointment as IG the issue of maintaining the national balance seemed to have become redundant. As *table 1.2* shows, foreign appointments did not altogether cease after 1927, although they did drop significantly to make way for a steep rise in Chinese recruitment. In the anti-imperialist climate of the late 1920s and early 1930s the most important staffing issue for the Customs was the respective positions of the foreign and Chinese staffs, and the question of what sort of future the Service held for its foreign employees. Japanese aggression in China from 1931 onwards added a different problem to the staffing agenda. From the late nineteenth century Japan had pressed for increased representation and for the appointment of Japanese Commissioners at key ports of Japanese influence such as Qingdao (held by Japan 1915-22) and Dalian (held by Japan 1905-45). From 1932, however, when the Manchurian Customs stations were lost to the Japanese state of Manzhuguo, Maze

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[11] See John Schrecker, *Imperialism and Chinese Nationalism: Germany in Shantung* (Cambridge MA, 1971), Chapter One, 'The Acquisition of the German Sphere of Influence', pp. 1-42.
[12] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 2, letter Z/819, 26 February 1899, p. 1189.
[13] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 2, letter Z/1041, 8 January 1905, p. 1447.

was consistently required to fend off or make concessions to demands for Japanese staff increases at strategic ports such as Shanghai.

This pressure intensified with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, which saw a massive intake of Japanese recruits the following year and, thereafter, a constant stream of demands from the Japanese authorities for increased Japanese recruitment and the appointment of Japanese to influential posts and commissionerships.[14] The dismissal of all British and American employees in December 1941 following Pearl Harbor increased the Japanese preponderance in the foreign staff further. In January 1945 the Japanese quota stood at 1,001—almost seventy-five per cent of the entire foreign staff (*table 1.1*). All Japanese employees were, however, dismissed in August 1945 and at the end of the month Little found himself in charge of a small but long-serving cohort of 339 foreigners and 4,105 Chinese employees.[15] The Inspectorate had achieved almost full sinification of the staff and the days of foreign employees were quite clearly numbered at this point. Rather than working to maintain the national balance, Little's job was to protect the interests of his foreign employees as best he could until the Foreign Inspectorate's inevitable demise.

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[14] For Japanese recruitment to the Service see Robert Bickers, 'Anglo-Japanese Relations and Treaty Port China: the Case of the Maritime Customs Service,' forthcoming in Anthony Best (ed.), *The International History of East Asia, 1900-1968: Ideology, Trade and the Quest for Order* (forthcoming 2007).

[15] Figures calculated for 31 August 1945. Service lists database of employees withdrawn from service.

2) Joining the foreign Staff: Recruitment procedures and experiences

The Indoor Staff

In the early years recruitment to the Indoor staff was decidedly unsystematic and non-standardised, the usual method being to send a trusted acquaintance or senior Customs man to scout for likely candidates whilst on home leave, or else to recruit from amongst the sons and relatives of Hart's acquaintances in China. The formation of the London Office in 1874, under the control of Hart's trusted deputy James Duncan Campbell as Non-Resident Secretary (NRS) 1874-1907, changed all this by providing a permanent base from which candidates could be interviewed, examined and selected.[16] Recruitment procedures, however, always remained to some extent unsystematic. As the number of yearly vacancies was always small—usually numbering less than ten annual appointments in the nineteenth century and around thirteen or fourteen per year between 1900 and 1927—there was simply no need for an annual recruitment drive as there was for larger and more personnel-hungry overseas services such as the ICS and the Colonial Services. By way of comparison, ICS recruitment peaked at around sixty appointments per year between 1893 and 1898.[17] The London Office was, however, the single most important base through which Indoor recruitment was coordinated, and the NRS's correspondence with the IG provides the bulk of our information about recruitment procedures and the qualities sought in new Assistants.

Although all candidates were ultimately vetted by the NRS, only those who possessed a *personal* nomination from the Inspector General were permitted to apply for a post. This system of appointment through nomination was the most controversial aspect of Indoor Staff recruitment for contemporaries, becoming further evidence for Hart's adversaries of his autocratic control of the service. Patronage, nepotism and non-advertisement of posts were, however, certainly not unusual features of overseas administrative services—a similar policy of non-advertisement of posts could be found in the British consular service and even the most junior appointments to the Colonial Service were made under a patronage system until

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[16] *Documents Illustrative*, vol. I, circular no. 3 of 1874 (first series), 'Non-Resident Secretary, Mr. Campbell appointed', p.325.

[17] Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, p. 91. After this period recruitment levels fell to around fifty appointments per year, 1901-05.

1931—and neither was this system entirely inflexible.[18] Although successive Inspector Generals *did* nominate a fair proportion of candidates on the strength of their personal connections to the Service, the vast majority received their nominations after sending an application to the IG supported by sufficient recommendations 'as regards antecedents and character'.[19]

Some candidates acquired their nominations after a family member appealed to the IG on their behalf. For Hart, the volume of applications from distinguished and influential families denoted the regard with which the Service was held in Britain. In 1883, reporting that the former British minister to China, Sir Harry Parkes, had asked for a nomination for his son, Hart proudly surmised; 'this application shows two things a/ that this Service is taking a high stand as a public Service, and b/ that Parkes, a good judge in Eastern matters, is a believer in the probability of its being a long-lived one'.[20] In 1901, too, in response to the Spanish minister's requests for an appointment for his son, Hart boasted that 'Cologan's desire to put his son in the Customs (rather than the diplomatic service) shows the estimation in which the Service is held, and also the confidence there is in its duration'.[21] Hart, however, also recognised the limits to which he could push the Customs' position. Commenting on a potential recruit, B. Currie, who had defected to the ICS in 1896, Hart acknowledged that 'although I wanted him here, one's own Govt. is the best to serve for a career, and Indian opportunities cannot be surpassed'.[22] The Customs might have been able to compete with the diplomatic and consular services, but could not outshine the attraction of an ICS post.

Many candidates owed their nominations to decidedly tenuous links to the Service. B. E. Foster Hall, for example, who worked in the Indoor Staff 1913-43, obtained his through a chance meeting with a schoolboy whose father worked in the London Office, which 'resulted in a visit to Westminster the next day, an interview, a written application to the Inspector General in Peking, a qualifying examination three

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[18] See Platt, *The Cinderella Service*, pp. 71-4 for the consular service. For the operation of patronage on an 'everyday level' in making Colonial Service appointments see Anthony Kirk-Greene, "Not Quite a Gentleman": The Desk Diaries of the Assistant Private Secretary (Appointments) to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1899-1915', *English Historical Review*, no. 472 (2002), p. 623. This can be contrasted with the open advertisement of vacancies in the Shanghai Municipal Police in national British newspapers. See Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, pp. 31-2.

[19] CSA, 679(3) 1599, 'London Office: dispatches to I.G., 1910', 'Memo.; Admission to the Chinese Customs Service Indoor Staff', 20 Dec 1899.

[20] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, letter Z/117, 8 April 1883, p. 458.

[21] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 2, letter Z/907, 20 October 1901, p. 1286.

[22] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, letter Z/721, 13 September 1896, p. 1083.

weeks later, and appointment to the Service within a month of having first heard of it!'[23] If a young man knew the right people, or was simply in the right place at the right time, it was by no means difficult to secure an Indoor Staff nomination, despite the lack of a systematic recruitment drive.[24]

When attempting to maintain the national balance in the staff by recruiting non-Britons, moreover, candidates could not realistically be found in any other way than through an unmethodical system of appointment by nomination. Advertising posts in a range of different countries was impractical and problematic and the powers of the London Office were limited when it came to recruiting non-British Assistants. Long-serving Commissioners and acquaintances of the IG were often entrusted with the task of scouting for likely candidates of a certain nationality whilst on home leave, and sometimes of interviewing, examining and determining their suitability. This was the preferred method used to recruit Americans, who could not be expected to cross the Atlantic solely to sit the London Office exam and interview. Furthermore, American university graduates were often considered well-qualified enough to be exempted from sitting a qualifying examination of any kind. Whilst on home leave in 1874, for example, American Commissioner Edward B. Drew recruited four young Assistants from Harvard University on Hart's behalf, including future Customs high-flyers H. F. Merrill (in the Indoor Staff 1874-1916) and H. B. Morse (in the Indoor Staff 1874-1909).[25]

Of course, this reliance on senior employees and acquaintances in recruiting non-Britons had its pitfalls, not least that those assigned the task of finding candidates were all too ready to nominate members of their own families, sometimes without regard for their qualifications or suitability. In 1910 when Swedish Indoor man C. A. Asker was charged with recruiting a fellow national in conjunction with the Swedish minister to China, Asker promptly nominated his brother. Acting IG Robert Bredon was aghast, telegraphing NRS Bruce Hart; 'No! With limited Swedish representation can't have two same family I want man supported by Swedish Minister'.[26] As it

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[23] B. E. Foster Hall papers, B. E. Foster Hall, 'My Life and Work in China, 1913-1943'.

[24] In 1911 the Customs briefly tried recruiting through the Cambridge Appointments Board, but as the scheme only yielded four applicants—only one of whom was suitable—it was soon abandoned. CSA, 679(3) 1600, 'London Office: dispatches to IG', dispatch no. 3,807, NRS Bruce Hart to Acting IG Bredon, 11 Feb 1911.

[25] Fairbank et al, *H. B. Morse*, pp. 19-22. Hart's main stipulations regarding these American recruits were that they should be 'fairly healthy' and have good handwriting.

[26] CSA, 679(3) 1598, 'London Office: dispatches to IG, 1910', dispatch, Acting IG Bredon to NRS Hart, February 1910. In spite of his professed reluctance to appoint men nominated by their ministers,

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turned out, the Swedish minister *did* support Asker's nomination, and so he was grudgingly appointed. Complaints of nepotism from the Acting IG were, in any case, hard to take seriously at a time when Robert Hart's son, Bruce, occupied the post of NRS, Hart's nephew Frederick Maze was working his way up through the Indoor Staff ranks, and Bredon himself was Hart's brother-in-law.[27]

The second step in the recruitment process was a qualifying interview and exam held at the London Office. Certain concrete specifications which candidates were required to conform to were decided upon in the early decades of the Service and remained mostly unchanged until 1927. Both the 1899 and 1924 regulations for admission to the Indoor Staff stipulated that candidates must be between the ages of nineteen and twenty-three (although this rule was occasionally bent to appoint exceptional candidates who were overage), unmarried and medically fit. The Inspectorate was unambiguous about its need for young, healthy men who would not encumber the Service with the costs of housing and transporting a family.[28] The content of the London Office interview and exam varied according to the NRS's discretion and the number of candidates. Sometimes it was merely intended to ascertain that a candidate was suitably qualified and sometimes—when, for example, ten men had received nominations yet there were only two vacancies to fill—the exam took on a competitive character.[29] The interviewing event *did*, however, consistently assess three criteria; academic ability, 'character' and medical fitness, and social qualities.

The first, academic ability was judged by an examination designed to test the candidate's general education, including their knowledge of modern European languages, written English and arithmetic. Its aim was to assess all-round competence—in depth knowledge of subjects specifically useful to the Service or a show of academic brilliance was not required, nor particularly valued. Hart himself was clear on this point, instructing Campbell that, 'while I do not want to set up any

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in 1881 Hart had relied on the judgment of the Italian minister to China in selecting two Italians—Volpicelli and Tiberli. *Archives of China's Imperial Maritime Customs*, vol. 1, letter Z/50, Hart to Campbell, 22 May 1881, p. 683.

[27] See O'Leary, 'Robert Hart in China', pp. 599-600.

[28] CSA, 679(3) 1599, 'London Office; dispatches to IG, 1910', 'Memo: admission to the Chinese Customs Service Indoor Staff', 20 December 1899; CSA, 679(3) 1622, 'London Office; dispatches to IG, 1924', 'Memo: admission to the Chinese Customs Service Indoor Staff', 1923.

[29] Hart reluctantly agreed to Campbell's suggestion that a system of limited competition for Indoor posts be introduced in 1875, although he insisted that there would sometimes be 'preference candidates' to whom an appointment would be given on the proviso that they qualified. *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, 17 February 1875, p. 188.

factitious or extravagant standard of scholarship, I hope by these test-examinations to eliminate the unpromising persons and to confirm the nominations of only such men as have received a sound elementary education, and whose manner and bearing are significant of developing capacity and strength in reserve'.[30] A few years later, in an 1880 letter to Campbell instructing him to recruit four Russians, Hart reminded his colleague that, 'I want them to be young and bright—I mean likely to learn—that is, likely to learn how to live in China, how to get on with messmates, how to talk to the public.'[31] Hart ended his letter with a postscript warning, 'so don't start with one glass slipper, and spend years in looking for a Cinderella'.[32]

In this respect the Customs set itself apart from more intellectually-exacting services such as the ICS and the Eastern Cadetships. In the ICS the inauguration of a competitive entrance examination system followed by an additional assessed year of university study from 1858 helped to establish its position as the most esteemed and intellectually refined overseas service.[33] Similarly, the introduction of a competitive exam in 1869 for entry to administrative service in the Straits Settlements, the Hong Kong Cadets, and the Ceylon Civil Services contributed to their reputations as academically-elite cohorts. The SPS was something of an anomaly amongst the elite overseas services—being less concerned with academic achievement than with athletic prowess it employed an 'Oxbridge "closed-shop" recruiting procedure' based on patronage and interviews rather than an exam.[34] By way of contrast, according to D. C. M. Platt the lower educational standards and lack of systematic examination of candidates to the British consular service contributed to its reputation as an unprofessional and impoverished sister of the diplomatic service.[35] The Customs' use of a qualifying or semi-competitive exam to select men for its administrative corps is, therefore, in part telling of its aspirations to achieve a high standing amongst other, more orthodox, overseas services.

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[30] CSA, 679(2) 1190, 'London Office: dispatches from IG', dispatch no. 26, Hart to Campbell, 24 Feb 1874. Despite the fairly low standard of academic ability required, candidates still occasionally found it necessary to cheat in the exam. In 1880, for example, Campbell reported that he had disqualified two candidates, Ogilby and Wade, after finding them copying answers from each other and from history and geography books in the exam room. *Archives of China's Imperial Maritime Customs*, vol. 1, A/200, Campbell to Hart, 4 June 1880, p. 522.

[31] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, letter A/26, 14 Dec 1880, p. 351.

[32] CSA, 679(2) 1190, 'London Office; dispatches from IG', London Office dispatch no. 26, Hart to Campbell, 24 Feb 1874.

[33] Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, pp. 72-3.

[34] J. A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects in the Diffusion of an Ideal* (London edition, 1998), p. 74.

[35] Platt, *The Cinderella Service*, pp. 71-4.

The Indoor Staff was certainly a respectable career option, yet it did not appeal to the very best candidates. In 1880, Campbell bemoaned the poor standard of men attracted to the Indoor Staff, complaining that 'very few of the Candidates, who have hitherto come before me, would have passed the Civil Service Examination for first Class Clerkships or for the Consular Service in China'.[36] By the twentieth century a better grade of candidates could be expected, yet the Inspectorate evidently was not looking for an educated elite to fill Indoor Staff positions. As Hart succinctly phrased it, 'we want men and not encyclopaedias'.[37] The Inspectorate sought nothing more than 'youthful, likely men, who can read, write and count', who were unburdened by intellectual pretensions and could easily adapt to life in China.[38] The Customs was image-conscious but was also practical about its needs and limitations.

The second component of the interviewing process is also revealing of the type of man sought by the Customs. The stipulation that candidates should pass a medical examination, to prove they were free from 'organic disease', 'consumption', 'hereditary delicacy' and 'lameness', is self-explanatory; the Customs needed to eliminate men who were unfit or unwell and were therefore unwise investments for the Service.[39] 'Character' is a more nebulous concept, yet was also the most important part of the entire interviewing process. Although the exact meaning of 'character' was never clearly defined, it was nonetheless used ubiquitously by the recruitment boards of overseas administrative services as a marker of promise and suitability.[40] 'Character' embodied various virtues considered to be held by men of a certain social class, including a striking appearance, moral uprightness, and a well-developed sense of duty, and was assessed by careful observation of a man's mannerisms and appearance on the day of interview. In 1875, for example, Hart lectured Campbell on how to identify the most valuable qualities in candidates. 'As regards the competitive examination', he instructed, 'I wish you chiefly to bear in

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[36] *Archives of China's Imperial Maritime Customs*, vol. 1, letter A/201, Campbell to Hart, 11 June 1880, pp. 523-4.
[37] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, letter A/39, 18 December 1881, p. 398.
[38] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 2, letter A/26, 14 December 1880, p. 351.
[39] Candidates were, for example, provided with sufficient funds to buy a first class passage to China, an amount fixed at £100 in 1904, and so were expected to stay for a lengthy career in the Customs. See CSA, 679(3) 1599, 'London Office: dispatches to IG, 1910', 'memo of existing regulations for Indoor recruits, 1904', enclosed in dispatch no. 3,773, Hart to Campbell, 17 Aug 1910.
[40] For a discussion of the importance of 'character' in overseas administrative services see Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, p. 276 and Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism*, especially Chapter Three, 'Manly Chaps in Control: Blues and Blacks in the Sudan'. For empire and character see P. J. Cain, 'Character and Imperialism: The British Financial Administration of Egypt, 1878-1914', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 34, no. 2 (2006), 177-200.

mind the requirements of the Service: for instance, a man of average attainments, healthy constitution, cheerful temperament, and possessing the appearance of being gifted with good common sense and a prepossessing exterior, would suit us much more than a short-sighted, weak-chested, lugubrious, impracticable "double-first"'.[41] Campbell evidently took this advice to heart, often passing over candidates who achieved top marks in the academic exam in favour of those who possessed a superior 'character'. In 1882 for example, reporting on a recent competitive interview, Campbell advised that 'in prepossessing appearance, nice manners, gentle breeding, and good connections, young Brownlow—taking all together—is *facile princeps*', in spite of the fact that he had performed badly in the exam.[42] A positive disposition, pleasing appearance and good social bearing—personal qualities which would help to secure the Indoor Staff's reputation as a respectable and highly-regarded administrative corps—were of inestimable value to the Inspectorate, and frequently trumped academic ability.

Good looks were also a bonus when applying to the Service in the nineteenth century; Hart had an eye for a 'specially prepossessing looking youth' and the photographs of prospective assistants were forwarded to Peking for his inspection.[43] The immediate impression formed by a candidate's appearance, including clothes and demeanour, was also an influential factor in deciding upon appointments in other overseas services. In his study of the initial stage of recruitment to the Colonial Services Kirk-Greene observed that 'a poor impression here [with regard to appearance] was tantamount to *finis*'.[44] The Inspectorate's preoccupation with appearance could also betray its racial prejudices, belying its claims to be embracing cosmopolitan harmony. In 1910, for example, current NRS Bruce Hart, giving his reasons for rejecting candidate Jack Brinkley, explained that 'Mr Brinkley is Eurasian

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[41] CSA, 679(3) 1190, 'London Office; dispatches from IG', dispatch no. 94, Hart to Campbell, 17 July 1875.
[42] *Archives of China's Imperial Maritime Customs*, vol. 1, letter Z/203, Campbell to Hart, 5 May 1882, p. 735.
[43] Quote taken from a letter from Hart to Campbell commenting on a photograph of prospective recruits taken in 1898. See *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 2, letter Z/788, 27 March 1898, p. 1157. In 1877 Hart sent a nomination for a Mr Deacon to Campbell, claiming that 'his application and photo have won my heart'. *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, letter Z/45, 15 February 1877, p. 238.
[44] Kirk-Greene, "Not Quite a Gentleman", p. 629.

both in features and demeanour, and he has the elliptical mode of expression (*vide* his papers) typical of the half-caste'.[45]

In Hart's eyes, a prepossessing appearance went hand in hand with social success. Although less significant than academic ability and 'character', being taken into account only when 'striking the balance of merit' between contenders, a candidate's social qualities could tip the balance in his favour.[46] On instructing Campbell to find an auditor for the Inspectorate, for example, Hart declared that 'if he or his wife have any social talent—sings, plays, dresses, or *looks* well—so much the better'.[47] Once a fresh batch of recruits landed in Peking, Hart would take it upon himself to pass judgement on the social graces of Campbell's choices, pronouncing them 'too fond of play', '*too* cool' or else 'awfully conceited'.[48] In 1877 he considered Deacon, recently arrived as one of a group of four new appointees, 'a terrible man to jaw'.[49] Customs recruits injected new blood into Peking's rather tedious foreign society, and so the social qualities of new arrivals were all-important if the Indoor Staff were to make China their home.

In marked contrast to Hart and Campbell's volley of letters discussing the *minutiae* of recruitment practices, later IGs were notably less voluble on the subject. Few discussions regarding Indoor recruitment ensued between Hart's successor, Sir Francis Aglen (Inspector General 1911-27), and his various Non-Resident Secretaries. By this time the qualities needed in Indoor men had been squarely decided upon, semi-competitive examinations were the norm, and, moreover, the Service's international reputation had been secured, meaning there was no shortage of willing candidates.[50] Furthermore, by the time that Maze succeeded to the position of IG in January 1929 regular recruitment of Indoor men had ceased; the last non-Japanese foreign Assistant was appointed in February 1927. Maze did, however, protest

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[45] CSA, 679(3) 1597, 'London Office: dispatches to IG, 1909', dispatch no. 3,710, NRS Bruce Hart to Acting IG Bredon, 5 October 1910.
[46] CSA, 679(3) 1590, 'London Office: Dispatches to IG, 1905', dispatch no. 3,355, Hart to Campbell, 25 November 1904.
[47] *Archives of China's Imperial Maritime Customs*, vol. 1, letter from Hart to Campbell, 27 Jan 1874, p. 3.
[48] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, letters Z/8, 5 August 1877, p. 247; Z/84, 18 August 1882, p. 418; Z/276, 15 November 1886, p. 649.
[49] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, letter Z/8, 5 Aug 1877, p. 247.
[50] Although in the 1870s and 1880s Hart had frequently complained that the Customs was short-staffed and that suitable Indoor men could not be found, by the 1890s the Service was 'over-manned' and Hart was forced to consistently turn away promising candidates. In 1899, for example, he protested that there were '*absolutely no vacancies!*' and that the Service was 'quite swamped by juniors'. *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 2, letter Z/824, Hart to Campbell, 23 April 1899, p. 1194.

against this situation, despite the fact that he had initially championed full sinification of the staff. In 1935 he put forward a case for the recommencement of foreign Indoor recruitment, arguing that in the present political climate extraterritorialised foreign staff were more able to handle politically-delicate local situations than their Chinese counterparts.[51] His efforts were to no avail. Maze's task, which was also that of his successor in 1943, L. K. Little, was to preserve the integrity of the Customs and ensure that the jobs of the remaining foreign staff were safe for the moment, until the Foreign Inspectorate's end.

[51] CSA, 679(9) 2484, 'Sealed packet containing confidential Z letters from IG to NRS', confidential memorandum, Maze to the Guanwushu, 7 December 1935.

The Outdoor, Marine and technical staffs

Recruitment of tidewaiters and watchers for the Outdoor Staff took a markedly different path to the appointment of Indoor men, a difference which was telling of the disparity in status afforded to these two branches. Most obviously, the main difference lay in the recruitment of Outdoor men on-the-spot in China as vacancies arose, usually from the foreign seafaring populations which congregated in large treaty ports such as Shanghai and Canton. Rasmussen's almost accidental route into the Customs was by no means unique; the foreign Outdoor ranks were filled with similarly transient characters looking for temporary employment in China between seafaring jobs. The Customs could prove a more amenable billet than life on a merchant ship, and also provided a means by which such men could stay in China for an extended sojourn.

The majority of Marine Department employees were appointed in a similar manner, although usually from amongst the qualified ship's officers looking for work in the treaty ports than from the larger pool of unskilled seamen who formed the bulk of the foreign Tidewaiter, Coast and Lights Staff ranks. On occasion the Inspectorate was forced to turn to the London Office to find suitable men when recruiting technical staff, especially in the early years. In 1877, for example, Hart asked Campbell to find his 'a dozen competent Lightkeepers' as 'we cannot get trained men out here', and also asked for a batch of decent mechanics as 'Chinese mechanics can't do this kind of work, and low-class English mechanics will drink'.[52] Usually, however, it was easy enough to find a sufficient number of recruits in China itself.

Local appointment of Tidewaiters, Marine, Coast and Lights staff was in many respects a very practical policy, yet this casual approach to recruitment also had its flaws. Although Marine employees were, in any case, invariably appointed on a fixed-term contract basis rather than with long-term employment in mind, on-the-spot recruitment of Tidewaiters meant that the Inspectorate held little control over the length of service of its Outdoor employees. A further drawback was that this system also attracted an excess of uncommitted and undesirable candidates. Unlike their colleagues in the Indoor Staff, who were employed as career administrators, most employees in the 'outdoor' branches felt little attachment to the Customs or affinity with its cause and were more likely to decamp after a short period of service, meaning

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[52] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, 23 January 1877, p. 233.

the Inspectorate was wary of investing in their passages from Europe to China. By way of contrast the Shanghai Municipal Police, which recruited from much the same socio-economic base as the Customs 'outdoor' branches, appointed many of its constables in Britain, all of whom were required to swear on oath to serve in the SMP for at least three years.[53]

In 1906 proposals to follow the SMP's example by recruiting Watchers through the London Office were fielded for the first time when the Chief Tidesurveyor at Shanghai complained of the shortage of suitable Outdoor candidates in China. Existing recruitment procedures, he surmised, inevitably led to the employment of 'men of poor education, unsteady habits, and without the good character which is so necessary for men who almost immediately after being employed are put in positions of trust'. As a remedy to this situation he proposed that prospective applicants be nominated by existing members of the Outdoor Staff, who would extol the benefits of working in the Customs to their friends and family at 'home'.[54] This half-hearted measure was, however, unsuccessful and the staffing situation continued to degenerate as the increasing demand for European labour in China enticed many would-be Outdoor men into more rewarding employment options in foreign China coast firms. Although nothing came of proposals to find candidates through the Salvation Army and through Danish navigation schools, the advent of war in 1914 and the critical staff shortage which accompanied it meant that the Inspectorate was forced to take action.[55] During the war years, from August 1914 to October 1918, 943 foreign employees withdrew the Service. These figures include 146 Germans and Austrians who were dismissed as enemy subjects in August 1917 after China entered the war on the side of the Allies.[56] By way of contrast, in the year immediately prior to the outbreak of war, from August 1913 to August 1914, only

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[53] See Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, pp. 32-3 and pp. 90-1. From 1910 policemen could be imprisoned if they absconded before the three year period expired.

[54] CSA, 679(1) 26898, 'Inspector general's circulars, vol. 9, second series, nos. 1,202-1,400, 1905-6', Shanghai Chief Tidesurveyor, C. P. Dawson's, memo, enclosed in IG circular no. 1,357, 2 July 1906. Recruits were required to come to China at their own expense with the promise that their passage money would be refunded after three years of service. In 1915 more favourable terms of employment were offered to these 'home' recruits when the Inspectorate offered to pay for a second-class passage to China, which the candidate agreed to refund if he resigned from service within three years of appointment. See CSA, 679(1) 26904, 'Inspector General's circulars, vol. 14, second series, nos. 2,301-1,591, 1915-16', IG circular no. 2,426, 13 October 1915.

[55] See CSA, 679(3) 1602, 'London Office: dispatches to IG, 1913', dispatch no. 3,967, NRS Hart to IG Aglen, 12 Aug 1913 and 679(3) 1603, 'London Office: dispatches to IG, 1914', NRS Carruthers to IG Aglen, 24 April 1914 for proposals to recruit through the Salvation Army and Danish navigation schools.

[56] Figures derived from service lists database of employees withdrawn from service.

164 foreign employees withdrew from service. In response to depleting Outdoor numbers Aglen instructed current NRS, Paul King, to appoint fifty ex-British Navy men through the London Office as Tidewaiters to fill the void. A few years later in 1920, when Outdoor numbers were still below quota, King was again compelled to appoint forty-eight more men, forty of whom were recruited through the Admiralty.[57] King assured Aglen that the new recruits had been carefully selected and had promising Customs careers ahead of them.

Within a couple of years, however, this avenue of recruitment had proved a resounding failure. As early as 1918 grievances were surfacing from amongst these naval recruits about Customs living conditions and terms of employment, and some began to resign or abscond.[58] Even as late as 1925 London Outdoor recruits continued to gripe about their treatment at the hands of the Customs. Current NRS, Cecil Bowra, was nonplussed, indignantly protesting that 'every possible care has been taken to explain present Service conditions and future prospects to candidates for appointment' and insisting that each man had been 'plainly told that he is engaged for serious work and not for a life of play and amusement'.[59] Outdoor men engaged in London, it emerged, were singularly unsuited to the Customs; their expectations of life and work in China often bore little relation to its disappointing reality. Most of them withdrew from service within a couple of years, usually drifting to Hong Kong where they would either rejoin the armed forces or make their way back to Britain. Men appointed on-the-spot in Shanghai or Canton were much more aware of and resilient to the conditions of life in a Chinese port.

Matters did not become easier after Maze took over the Inspector Generalship. Employment in the Outdoor Staff had become an increasingly unattractive option throughout the 1920s. In 1929 Shanghai Chief Tidesurveyor, Skuse, spoke out about the reasons why the Outdoor Staff attracted substandard candidates:

> The facts are, conditions to-day are not what they were a few years ago. We cannot afford to take on anybody who applies. We must have good men for both branches of

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[57] CSA, 679(1) 15073, 'Withdrawal of Out-door Staff London recruits', letter from NRS King to IG Aglen, 9 Oct 1917 and 679(3) 1609, 'London Office: dispatches to IG, 1920', dispatch no. 4,416, King to Aglen, 16 June 1920.

[58] See, for example, CSA, 679(1) 15073, 'Withdrawal of Out-door Staff London recruits, 1920', letter from Commodore of HMS Tamar, Hong Kong, to IG Aglen, 20 Jan 1918, informing Aglen that certain ex-naval London recruits had complained to the general staff officer at Shanghai that they were not being fairly treated under the terms and conditions they accepted in London.

[59] CSA, 679(3) 1623, 'London Office: dispatches to IG, 1925', dispatch no. 4,793, NRS Bowra to IG Aglen, 13 March 1925.

> the Out-door staff; but we will not get good men at present rates of pay and under existing Service conditions.[60]

The terms of employment, rates of pay and benefits offered to Outdoor recruits simply did not appeal to enterprising young men seeking a long career in China.[61] The short-lived pattern of Outdoor careers, which was in part born out of unfavourable terms of employment and the casual attitude towards Outdoor recruitment, was compounded by the introduction of foreign contract labour in these branches after 1927. Following the suspension of foreign recruitment in 1927 a further 560 non-Japanese foreign nationals were appointed to the Customs on a short-term contract basis, most of whom worked in the Marine Department or Outdoor Staff. Maze was damning in his criticism of this system, branding it 'neither satisfactory nor conducive to the maintenance of the necessary morale and esprit de corps of the Service'.[62] If the Service required foreign technical and marine expertise, he argued, it should make use of it under satisfactory terms of employment. Yet, despite the IG's condemnation of the new system, foreign contract labour and transitory career patterns persisted in the Outdoor and Marine Staffs until the Foreign Inspectorate's end and the Custom never did manage to divest itself of the negative image of 'outdoor' work that had prevailed since the nineteenth century.

The divergent approaches towards appointing Indoor and Outdoor employees had much more far-reaching consequences than simply placing obstacles in the way of finding satisfactory 'outdoor' men. The different levels of investment in recruiting Indoor and 'outdoor' men embodied the respective values attached to various branches by the Inspectorate. The more exacting interview and examination process adopted for selecting Assistants points to the Indoor Staff's position as the high-status arm of the Customs, charged with promoting an image of the CCS as a highly professional and efficient service. The Customs certainly did not seek Indoor applicants of the very highest calibre—men who displayed too much intellectual prowess were unsuited to the Customs life of routine administration and, moreover, the Service could not afford to offer them sufficient financial or career incentives to

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[60] CSA, 679(1) 15019, 'Recruiting of 10 foreign Tidewaiters, 1929', Shanghai dispatch no. 22,799, Commissioner Myers, Shanghai, to IG Maze, 15 July 1929.

[61] Outdoor terms of employment were, however, marginally improved by the reorganisation of the Outdoor Staff in 1930. See CSA, 679(1) 15654, 'Re-organisation of Outdoor Staff, 1930', and Chapter Three.

[62] CSA, 679(9) 2484, 'Sealed packet containing confidential 'Z' letters from IG to NRS', confidential memorandum, Maze to Guanwushu, 7 December 1935.

join. Rather it sought men who would be amenable to Customs working methods, who would uphold the Service's good reputation, and, most importantly, who were considering a lengthy career in the Customs. Conversely, 'outdoor' recruitment methods exemplify the Inspectorate's treatment of 'outdoor' men as expendable elements of the Service, whose numbers could easily be replenished with minimal investment of time, money and effort. The disparate recruitment experiences of the various branches of the Service, therefore, set the scene for their future experiences of working in the Customs and the very different social and professional positions they would occupy in China.

3) Socio-economic background: The origins of a Customs man

We have so far seen *how* men joined the Customs, and the types of qualities the Inspectorate sought in its recruits. Equally important is the question of *who* these men were and, moreover, *why* they chose to work for the Chinese Customs Service. Inseparable from the issue of the motivations and expectations of European workers on the edges of empire is the riddle of how significantly the non-Western world featured in the minds of people at 'home'. Much scholarship has been devoted to debating this question, and opinion remains polarised between those, such as John Mackenzie, who argue that late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain was awash with literature and ephemera promoting the imperial cause and those, such as Bernard Porter, who contend that empire was a marginal concern to all but a small minority of people.[63]

Empire, however, although it may not have *mattered* particularly to most British people was undoubtedly a familiar concept—the proliferation of empire-related stories in popular newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* in the early twentieth century, for example, played a significant role in rendering empire knowable.[64] Whereas British people as a whole may not have consistently experienced a strong commitment to imperialist values, the existence of empire was, therefore, presumably part of their concept of Britishness. As Andrew Thompson has argued, Britons were neither indifferent to empire nor indoctrinated by imperialism. Instead, empire interacted with British society and institutions in a variety of complex and often contradictory ways.[65] Empire held varying degrees of importance for different people, according to personal experience and social class, but it did at least have *some* meaning, however limited.

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[63] For the argument that empire was interwoven into the fabric of everyday British life see John Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester, 1986). For children's literature on an imperial theme see Kathryn Castle, 'Imperial Legacies, New Frontiers: Children's popular literature and the demise of empire', in Stuart Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester, 2001). On the ubiquity of empire in turn-of-the-century London see Jonathon Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis* (New Haven CT,1999). For travel writing about the non-European world see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992). For the view that empire was a minor concern for British people see Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004).

[64] On newspapers and the imperial cause see Andrew S. Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics c. 1880-1932* (London, 2000), Chapter Three, 'Propagating Imperialism', pp. 61-79.

[65] Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow, 2005), 'Introduction', pp. 1-7.

China was certainly not unfamiliar in the British imagination. Although the early eighteenth-century popular enthusiasm for Chinoiserie had long since waned, an impetus for collecting specialised knowledge about China was gaining momentum in the nineteenth century. As diplomatic, mercantile and missionary contact with China grew after 1842 an East Asian 'information empire', to use James Hevia's suggestive term, was amassed by agents such as the Royal Asiatic Society, the British Library and the Foreign Office.[66] Although the average Customs recruit would most probably have been unaware of this growing body of academic and specialised knowledge, they would have very likely encountered China through different sources. The China coast genre of literature flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the writings of treaty port commentators and novelists such as Pearl Buck, Louise Jordan Miln and Putnam Weale, ranging in viewpoint from inflammatory to sympathetic portrayals of Chinese life, were international successes.[67] In the twentieth century Chinese communities in Britain were also being dramatised and sensationalised in the Limehouse sub-genre of fiction. Thomas Burke's *Limehouse Nights* collection (1916) and Sax Rohmer's 'Fu Manchu' series (published 1913-59) enthralled and outraged the public with their salacious tales of opium smuggling, gambling dens, white slavery and China's political menace, playing on and intensifying popular fears of 'yellow peril'.[68] Newly-engaged Customs men, therefore, inevitably embarked upon their new careers with certain preconceptions about China. Their 'knowledge' may well have been inaccurate and was almost certainly not academic, yet it at least provided them with the comfort that they were not entering an entirely alien land.[69] Although Customs men were not usually drawn to their careers *because* of any particular knowledge of China, their acquaintance with the China of the popular imagination meant that joining the Customs was not such an inconceivable step.

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[66] Hevia, *English Lessons*, Chapter Five, 'Constructing a New Order', pp. 123-55. Also see P. J. Marshall, 'Britain and China in the late eighteenth century', in Robert A. Bickers ed., *Ritual and Diplomacy: The Macartney Mission to China 1792-1794* (London, 1993) pp. 11-29.
[67] See Bickers, *Britain in China*, Chapter Two, 'China in Britain and in the British imagination', pp. 22-66, for an overview of early twentieth-century popular literature about China.
[68] See Anne Veronica Witchard, 'The Dark *Chinoiserie* of Thomas Burke and the Perversity of Limehouse' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 2003).
[69] See Lachlan Strahan, *Australia's China: Changing Perceptions from the 1930s to the 1990s* (Cambridge, 1996), 'Introduction', pp. 1-14, for an analysis of Australian views of China and how these stereotypes helped to render an unfamiliar place and culture familiar.

It was also entirely plausible that candidates to the Customs would have heard of or read about the Service itself. By the end of the nineteenth century, Hart had managed to successfully boost the Customs' international reputation. Although Hart grumbled about the cost and bother caused by Customs participation in international exhibitions—in Vienna (1873), Paris (1878 and 1900), and the London fisheries (1883) and health (1884) exhibitions—they undoubtedly served to raise the Customs' international profile.[70] Press acclaim for Robert Hart's achievements, moreover, would have only enhanced the Service's standing in Britain and Juliet Bredon's biography of her uncle, *Sir Robert Hart: The Romance of a Great Career*, published in 1909, ensured that Hart's memory lived on long after his retirement. The Customs, although certainly more obscure than, for example, the ICS or the Colonial Services, was by no means unknowable to the British public, especially in the twentieth century. Those interested in Customs employment could have obtained information about its work from a variety of sources, thereby meaning they were not venturing entirely into the unknown.

[70] In 1884, for example, on the eve of the London fisheries exhibition, Hart complained that 'all of us, are tired of it and have had quite enough of such work'. *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, letter A/54, 14 January 1884, p. 516.

The Indoor Staff

In his study of the lives and careers of two prominent ICS officers Clive Dewey argues that, as a result of family 'indoctrination', 'the members of one of the most powerful elites the world has ever known, the Indian Civil Service at the high noon of empire, were the prisoners of values they absorbed in their youth'.[71] Although this approach is flawed in its neglect of the significance of working experiences and service socialisation in carving the paths of colonial careers, it *does* highlight how family values, connections and expectations inspired many to join an overseas service.[72] Furthermore, as Andrew Thompson has observed, different socio-economic groups in Britain experienced a range of associations with empire, both positive and negative, which influenced their perceptions of the desirability of a colonial career.[73] Bearing this in mind, the socio-economic backgrounds and pre-Customs lives of the foreign staff in each branch can shed much light on how these recruits viewed their place within the non-Western world, their motivations for joining the Service and the Inspectorate's social prejudices.

Little is known, however, about the social origins of the first wave of Indoor recruits (see *table 1.3*) or the first wave of Commissioners (see *table 1.4*), and even the details of how they were recruited are largely a mystery. In the period prior to the formation of the London Office Indoor vacancies were usually filled informally through the IG's personal acquaintance with potential candidates, and the men who joined were usually recruited in China itself. William Lent, for example, one of the earliest recruits to the Indoor Staff in 1855, joined at then-IG Lay's personal invitation.[74] In the early days, promising Indoor candidates were often poached from the British consular service. W. T. Lay had only been in China as a student interpreter for a year before he left to join the Customs at Canton, and Hart himself had started out his career in China as a student interpreter before joining the Customs as a Deputy Commissioner in 1859.[75] Another early Customs Commissioner, Prosper Giquel, was

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[71] Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes*, p. vii. Dewey argues that one of the two officers, Frank Brayne, endured a strict evangelical upbringing meaning that 'he spent his entire youth at the vortex of a rural reconstruction drive run by clerical social workers', a policy he then replicated with limited success in the Punjab (p. 32).

[72] David Potter, for example, argues that, although social background was important, ICS officers were 'powerfully shaped by living as an adult in India'. Potter, *India's Political Administrators*, p. 58.

[73] Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?*, Chapter One-Chapter Three.

[74] See Fairbank *et al* (eds.), *Robert Hart and China's Modernization*, p. 443, note 78.

[75] For Hart's early years in China in the consular service see Fairbank *et al* (eds.), *Entering China's Service*.

a leading French naval officer in the Sino-French forces operating out of Ningbo against the Taipings before being invited to join the Customs in 1861.[76] The career trajectories of these early Indoor recruits were often meteoric. Many reached the rank of Commissioner within a few years (see *table 1.3*) and six of the sample of ten early Commissioners listed in *table 1.4* were appointed to the rank of Commissioner immediately on joining the Service. In its first two decades the Foreign Inspectorate needed experienced men who were capable of taking the helm of Customs stations right away. Most, however, withdrew from service within ten years of joining. In my sample of ten early Commissioners only one man, Piry, stayed for an exceptionally long career (41 years). In the IG's haste to fill up the foreign staff ranks in the 1850s, ill-advised personnel choices were inevitably made and this pattern of short-lived careers is to some degree telling of the poor quality of early recruits. On taking over the Inspector Generalship in 1863 Hart sought to remedy this situation by shaping the Indoor staff into a proficient and professional administrative corps, resolving in an 1864 diary entry to 'gradually get rid of all our "bad hats"'.[77] However, this pattern of brief careers also speaks of the limited professional opportunities offered by the Service in the 1850s and 1860s. Speedy promotion to one the highest Indoor ranks left little incentive to stay for a long career and so most moved on to more promising ventures after exhausting what the Customs had to offer.

***Table 1. 3*- First wave of Indoor Staff appointees**

Name	Nationality	Date of First Appointment	Position on appointment	Date of Withdrawal	Position on Withdrawal
Thomas Baker	British	July 1854	Secretary	Sept 1855	Secretary
William Lent	British	Jan 1855	Clerk	May 1863	Deputy Commissioner
W. Clarke	British	Dec 1856	Clerk	Oct1857	Clerk
Franz Wilzer	German	Jan 1857	Clerk	Oct 1864	Commissioner
P. Piry	French	Nov 1857	Clerk	May 1898	Deputy Commissioner
Robert Arnold	British	Nov 1857	Clerk	June 1863	1st Class Clerk
J. H. Hooper	Unknown	Jan 1859	3rd Class Clerk	July 1859	3rd Class Clerk
James Weigh Leonard	British	April 1859	3rd Class Clerk	Aug 1872	Commissioner
W. J. Alt	British	May 1859	Clerk	Nov 1859	Clerk
Gilmore, David	British	May 1859	3rd Class Clerk	April 1862	1st Class Clerk

Source- Service lists database of employees withdrawn from service

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[76] See Fairbank *et al* (eds.), *Robert Hart and China's Modernization*, p. 447, note 120.
[77] Fairbank *et al* (eds.) *Robert Hart and China's Modernization*, Hart's journal entry for 18 March 1864, p. 73.

Table 1.4- **First wave of Commissioners**

Name	Nationality	Date of first appointment	Position on appointment	Date of withdrawal	Position on Withdrawal
Colin Shan Matheson	British	June 1859	Commissioner	April 1861	Commissioner
H. T. Davies	British	June 1859	Commissioner	June 1863	Commissioner
George Henry Fitz-Roy	British	June 1859	Commissioner	June 1868	Commissioner
C. Kleczkowski	Belgian	March 1860	Commissioner	Aug 1867	Commissioner
William Baker	British	Aug 1861	Assistant and interpreter	Oct 1866	Acting Commissioner
Prosper Giquel	French	Oct 1861	Commissioner	1866 Nov	Commissioner
Eugene Baron de Meritens	French	Jan 1862	Commissioner	July 1871	Commissioner
William Maxwell	British	Sept 1862	Clerk	Sept 1865	Commissioner
W. T. Lay	British	Oct 1862	3rd Class Clerk	Sept 1912	Commissioner
W. Cartwright	British	Jan1863	4th Class Clerk	April 1882	Commissioner

Source- Service lists database of employees withdrawn from service

By 1874 the brief but dramatic careers characteristic of the 1850s and 1860s had been replaced by patterns of gradual progression through the Service ranks. Once the Customs had established its position in China it became a service which offered enduring careers with clear prospects for advancement. Furthermore, after the formation of the London Office meticulous records began to be routinely kept about the life and career details of all Indoor candidates. The remarkably thorough application forms submitted by candidates—providing details of nationality, date and place of birth, education, former employment and father's occupation—are particularly useful in building a profile of a typical Indoor man. To do this I have studied a sample of ninety-three such forms submitted by candidates to the Indoor staff—seventy-four of which were eventually appointed—comprising sixty British men (Irish employees were always recorded as British in the service lists), eight Frenchmen and eight Germans, a handful of Russians, Belgians, Austrians, Italians and Swedes, and a lone Norwegian, Dutchman and Indian.[78]

Turning first to the regional origins of the sixty British applicants, it is striking that one sixth of the sample were born in Ireland, an indication of the tenacity of Sir

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[78] This sample is collected from files in CSA, nos. 679(3) 1579-1582; 679(3) 1590-1591; 679(3) 1597-1603; 679(3) 1608-1612; 679(3) 1621-1625; 679(2) 1209, 'London Office: dispatches to IG'. Unfortunately, I do not have similar information for American candidates as they were rarely recruited through the London Office.

Robert Hart's Ulster roots. During his reign as IG accusations of nepotism were habitually levelled at Hart, and it has to be said that these allegations *did* contain some truth. In the course of his time as IG Hart selected eight family members for Customs posts, including his brother, James Hart, two brothers-in-law, his son, and three nephews, one of whom, Frederick Maze, even rose to the post of Inspector General in 1929.[79] Furthermore, Hart also drew upon a pool of distant relatives, old school friends and acquaintances to fill the Indoor Staff, although he stopped short of employing unsuitable men, however deep the nostalgia for his schooldays in Ireland ran.[80] After nominating two 'country cousins' for appointments in 1872, Hart admitted that 'it would be pleasant for me to see the lads get on', but warned Campbell to test them vigorously because, 'it would never do for them—my cousins—to be allowed to come out to join *this* service, unless they are fairly qualified now, and look like men from whom something may be expected by and by'.[81] Campbell failed them both. Some time later, in 1889, Hart expressed disappointment that the sons of two old acquaintances did not pass muster, yet nonetheless thanked Campbell for turning away unsuitable candidates:

> I am sorry Aitkin failed; but I am not surprised and you did right to reject him. I lodged in his grandfather's house in 1851-52 at college, and his father and myself were always good friends. And Evans is the nephew of a school-boy friend, Eustace Fannin; we were together at "the connexional" in Dublin 1847 to 1850.[82]

Although he was unashamedly eager to aid his distant relatives, old friends, and countrymen, Hart's compassion did not extend so far as to grant appointments to unsuitable men, whatever his personal connections to the candidate.

An even more striking finding about the regional origins of this sample of ninety-three Indoor candidates is that nineteen of them listed a non-European country as their place of birth. What is more, seventeen of these men were British, meaning that over one quarter of the entire British contingent were born in the non-Western world. These individuals were born in India, in Australia, in Japan, or on the islands

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[79] The two other nephews appointed were also from the Maze family; R. H. Maze in 1884 and H. M. Maze in 1888. Hart *did*, however, consistently refuse employment to his brother-in-law, James Maze. In response to one of his frequent letters asking for money and assistance in 1879, for example, Hart wrote to Campbell; 'I am very sorry the Maze family is in such distress but I really don't see any way to doing anything useful for them. *He* will not suit us in any position, and his wife and children must naturally look to him for support'. *The I.G. in Peking,* vol. 1, letter Z/11, 21 December 1879, p. 310.

[80] See O'Leary, 'Robert Hart in China', pp. 599-603.

[81] *The I.G. in Peking,* vol. 1, 28 July 1872, p. 86.

[82] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, letter Z/390, 12 May 1889, p. 745. Another example of Hart awarding nominations to the sons of relatives and old school friends was the appointment of future IG Francis Aglen, whose father, Archbishop Aglen, 'was my great chum at Taunton in '45'. *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, 19 August 1888, p. 716.

of South-East Asia, and eight were born in China itself. Work in the wider colonial world was, therefore, by no means an unprecedented step for these candidates raised in expatriate families. An example of one individual born outside of Europe from this sample is Percy Bencraft Joly, appointed to the Customs in 1909, who was born in Canton as a result of his father's consular career, schooled at the China Inland Mission school at Chefoo (Yantai) before finishing his education at King's College School, London, and who listed his hometown as Seoul. Others included Alexander Forbes, born in Tianjin in 1885 and appointed to the Customs in 1906, whose father was secretary of the Taku Tug and Lighter Company, and Austrian Dr Gustav Ritter von Kreitner, appointed 1911, who was born in Yokohama in 1886 where his father was consul-general. These three candidates did not stand alone in their claims to a Far Eastern heritage. For them, and for other men brought up with tales of China or in the unique environment of a treaty port, employment in the Customs was a logical and even unremarkable step. This pattern of pre-Customs experience of life in East Asia is mirrored in the finding that the fathers of nine candidates in this sample—out of a total of eighty-two for whom the father's occupation is recorded—had forged long careers as consuls, missionaries and merchants in China or Japan.[83] A further four had settled and worked elsewhere in the empire world, such as in Australia and the Straits Settlements. Many recruits to the Indoor Staff had, therefore, convenient links to the non-European world before embarking on Customs careers.

More telling, perhaps, is the finding that the fathers of a handful of candidates in this sample (four) were themselves former Customs employees. Elizabeth Buettner, in her study of the relationship between family and empire in late-imperial India, stresses 'the integral role of family practices in the reproduction of imperial rule and its personnel, accounting for the substantial degree of family continuity among the middle classes engaged with the raj'.[84] Family, therefore, was significant in both imparting imperialist ideologies and practices to British children, and in providing ready-made connections to the empire world. In a similar manner to the ICS, the Inspectorate sought to foster Service lineages, with men following their father's footsteps into a Customs career. Appointing the sons former or existing Indoor men was an indelible feature of Customs recruitment procedures since the earliest days.

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[83] The actual proportion may, in fact, be higher as the fathers' occupations of six men in this sample were not recorded.

[84] Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford, 2004), p. 2.

Although Franz Wilzer, an early Commissioner appointed to the Service in 1857 (see *table 1.3*), resigned from service and returned to Germany in 1864, he was nonetheless able to pull enough strings to secure an appointment for his son A. H. Wilzer in 1887. In many cases, the sons of former high-ranking Customs men were not even required to compete for an appointment—informing Campbell in 1877 of his nomination of Mr Davies, the son of a former commissioner, Hart let it be known that 'as he is an old Commissioner's son, I don't want him to compete: it will suffice to see that he is qualified'.[85] Hart also granted appointments to Campbell's son and to his cousin, Smollett Campbell.[86] Apart from ensuring that new recruits would be well-versed in Customs work, principles and purpose, the creation of 'Customs families' also spoke of the responsibility the Customs felt towards long-serving employees. If an employee died whilst working for the Customs it was not uncommon for the deceased man's son to be appointed to the Service within a year or two, therefore ensuring that the family was not left destitute and that the Inspector General's benevolence was bestowed appropriately. Three of this sample, C. Drummond (joined 1913), J. V. Porter (joined 1924) and M. M. Acheson (joined 1925), had fathers who died whilst employed by the Customs—their sons were appointed in their place almost immediately.[87]

In spite of its professed commitment to cosmopolitanism, the Inspectorate was not without its social prejudices when it came to recruiting Indoor men. Hart himself was unambiguously mistrustful of employees who had risen from humble beginnings. Commenting on Belgian postal clerk J. A. van Aalst in 1884 Hart surmised that:

> Like all men who make their way up from nothing he is of course without that foundation of character which heredity really gives: the responsibilities of position through three or four generations and the amenities of respectable life give form and solidity to the *nebulae* with which 'the first of his name' cannot help starting.

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[85] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, Hart to Campbell, 25 January 1877, p. 235. In 1890 Hart also instructed Campbell to give preference to the sons of two Commissioners—White and Kopsch—in the forthcoming competitive exams. *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, Z/448, Hart to Campbell, 24 July 1890, p. 803. White, however, failed to qualify.

[86] *Archives of China's Imperial Maritime Customs*, vol. 1, letter A/4, Hart to Campbell, 8 September 1879, p. 457. Although Hart initially disapproved of his appointment, Smollett went on to have a long career in the Customs (1872-1915) and reached the rank of Commissioner.

[87] The fathers of these three candidates were: J. I. M. Drummond, who joined in 1887 and died in the capacity of Commissioner in 1913; A. M. J. Porter, who joined in 1892 and died in 1913 whilst holding the position of Chief Assistant B.; and Guy Acheson, who joined 1888 and retired from the Service in January 1924 when Non-Resident Secretary. Acheson then held the post of co-director of the Customs College until his death in December 1924.

'It *is a mistake to help them up too high*', he concluded sagely.[88] Other overseas services exhibited similar social prejudices when making appointments. Comments on the initial vetting of applicants to the Colonial Services were, according to Anthony Kirk-Greene, pervaded by 'a strong atmosphere of contemporary snobbery'.[89] Men who did not fall into the class of 'gentleman' had little hope of securing a coveted administrative post in any well-regarded overseas service, including the Customs.

Although the Inspectorate did not seek *elite* recruits, it did require that Indoor men at least had 'respectable' beginnings, with the accompanying social traits that this brought. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the overarching pattern that emerges from this sample of ninety-three candidates—for whom the father's occupation is recorded in eighty-two instances—is that Indoor men overwhelmingly belonged to professional, middle-class families, a rising and expanding sector of British society from the late nineteenth century onwards.[90] A wide variety of father's occupations are recorded—ranging from analytical biologist, to musician, to commander of the *Guardia Nobile* (the Vatican City's police force)—yet the vast majority worked in solid and established professions, as, for example, army or naval officers (twelve), clergymen (nine), doctors and surgeons (seven), barristers (five), merchants (five), civil engineers (four), architects (three), and teachers (three). Only four, who listed their father's occupation as 'landowner', appeared to have roots in a more privileged social *milieu*. A similarly eclectic range of occupations was practised by the fathers of British China consuls—occupations ranged from 'landowner' to 'landscape painter' to 'straw-hat maker'.[91] Customs Indoor candidates, it seems, were drawn from much the same social base—wide-ranging yet largely middle-class—as appointees to the consular service.

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[88] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, letter Z/182, Hart to Campbell, 21 June 1884. This discussion was prompted by van Aalst's 'mistreatment of a Chinese'. Van Aalst, however, went on to enjoy a long Service career, promoted to the rank of Commissioner and Postal Secretary in 1899 and staying until 1914. In 1885 he published the definitive English-language treatise on Chinese music at the time, *Chinese Music* (Shanghai: Statistical Department, 1884). On van Aalst see Han Kuo-huang, 'J. A. van Aalst and his Chinese Music', *Asian Music*, vol. 19, no. 2 (1988), pp. 127-30.

[89] Kirk-Greene, "Not Quite a Gentleman", p. 628.

[90] For the growth of professional society in the late nineteenth century, and the changes this wrought on class hierarchies, see Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (London, paperback edition, 2002).

[91] See Coates, *China Consuls*, Appendix II, 'Chronological list of members of the China Consular Service'.

The parentage of Indoor men was invariably 'respectable', then, yet they also came from families which could rarely afford to provide their sons with any private source of income.[92] Financial needs, therefore, were a major consideration when choosing a career and the CCS compared favourably with many other available employment options, paying £400 annually for a Fourth Assistant B—the lowest rank in the foreign Indoor Staff—entering the Service in the late nineteenth century as compared with a £250 entry salary for the British civil service.[93] Practical concerns were key to the appeal of the Customs for young men whose socio-economic circumstances required that they quickly became settled in a secure and profitable job with clear prospects for advancement.

Running parallel to socialisation of children through family practices and philosophies was formal education, which some argue played a pivotal role in imbuing pupils with an imperial ethos. J. A. Mangan, for example, has pointed to 'the close and continuing association between British imperialism and the public-school system', which worked to instil pupils with a sense of their place within the empire world.[94] This direct linkage between education and work in empire—which implies that Britain's public schools fed the machinery of empire with an endless stream of young men moulded to the imperialist cause—is, however, rather too simplistic to make. Public schools undoubtedly fostered an awareness of and attachment to empire, yet most of these young men had much more prosaic reasons for choosing to work in an overseas service than a single-minded commitment to imperialism. Of particular importance was what Anthony Kirk-Greene has identified as the 'career factor'—meaning the appeal of a reliable, respectable and prosperous long-term career.

The educational background of Indoor candidates certainly points towards the prominence of these concerns and, moreover, also betrays their middle-class origins. Although a handful of British candidates had attended highly prestigious public schools, such as Marlborough, Westminster, Charterhouse, Stoneyhurst and

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[92] Andrew Thompson argues that empire provided employment opportunities for middle-class men who lacked the financial means to establish themselves in a professional career in Britain. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?*, pp. 17-28.

[93] Campbell, James Duncan Campbell, p. 30.

[94] J. A. Mangan, *'Benefits Bestowed'? Education and British imperialism* (Manchester, 1988), 'Introduction: Imperialism, history and education', p. 6. Mangan argues that public schools socialised pupils into imperial ideologies in a variety of ways: by fostering a network of 'old boys', by stressing the importance of sport, and by maintaining an 'emotional link' with empire.

Shrewsbury, the vast majority of the sixty British men in this sample were educated at the minor public schools which proliferated in the nineteenth century as a response to the growing demand amongst the middle classes for cheaper public school education which would intellectually and socially prepare their sons for professional careers.[95] The latter half of the nineteenth century, then, saw the introduction of a 'national classification of schools based on those for whom they were intended rather than how they were financed or what kind of education they provided'.[96] The affordability and career-oriented features of these new schools meant that they were well-suited to the needs of the predominantly middle-class candidates to the Indoor Staff.[97] The education of the European candidates in this sample is also telling of their parents' preference for schools which promised to equip their pupils with a sound general education and the skills necessary for a professional career—the overwhelming majority attended classical gymnasiums and lycées, and occasionally grammar schools, with only two attending technical schools (a 'commercial and industrial school' and a Realschule). Former students at these middling yet educationally-sound schools were exactly the type of candidates that the Service sought; young men who possessed a good general education, were hard-working and were career-minded.

To turn to higher education, unsurprisingly considering Hart's contempt for candidates with an 'impracticable "double first"', over one third of the sample (thirty-five in all) had no higher education whatsoever.[98] 'Higher education' was, moreover, broadly interpreted— post-secondary education for many of these men simply meant a year or two of leisurely language study in France or Germany. Only sixteen of the sixty British candidates and ten of the thirty-three non-British applicants had attended university. In this respect the Indoor Staff was set apart from and below more intellectually-esteemed overseas services; the ICS, for example, recruited forty-seven per cent of its officers from Oxford and Cambridge before 1947, and 270 of the 396

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[95] See T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools: A study of boys' public boarding schools in England and Wales from 1837 to the present day* (London, 1967), Chapter Two, 'The growth of the system (I): Meeting new social demands by new schools', pp. 17-38.

[96] See Colin Shrosbee, *Public Schools and Private Education: The Clarendon Commission 1861-64 and the Public Schools Act* (Manchester, 1988), p. 2. The Clarendon Commission, which investigated Eton, Westminster, Charterhouse, St Paul's, Merchant Taylor's, Harrow, Rugby and Shrewsbury, was followed in 1869 by the more comprehensive Taunton Commission, which investigated almost 800 schools of all types and standards.

[97] Elizabeth Buettner shows how British-Indian families chose schools for their sons according to the qualifications they could provide for a future career. Buettner, *Empire Families*, p. 175.

[98] CSA, 679(2) 1190, 'London Office: dispatches from IG', dispatch no. 94, Hart to Campbell, 17 July 1875.

men recruited to the Sudan Political Service 1899-1952 had university degrees.[99] University 'attendance', moreover, did not necessarily mean that the candidate had been awarded a degree as more often than not Customs men had failed to graduate, or else fared badly in their exams. For many prospective candidates the Customs was a fortuitous career option followed up almost out of desperation after these young men found themselves unable to continue with their education because of academic failure or financial difficulties. To cite two examples, the university career of J. O. P. Bland, who worked in the Indoor Staff 1883-96, was cut short because of his family's financial difficulties. 'It was not a case of having heard the East a callin', but simply of *res angusta domi*', wrote Bland about the circumstances of his appointment, as his father 'could ill afford to have me on his hands for four or five years'.[100] James Anderson, in the Indoor Staff 1914-41, found himself in dire financial straits after he failed his first year exams at Cambridge, causing his father to cut off all support.[101] Both men decided to join the Customs as an expedient alternative to university. Unlike overseas services which prided themselves on the intellectual prowess of their recruits, the Customs prized practicality over intellect in its employees and strove to achieve a reputation for competency rather than brilliance in its staff.

The previous employment of candidates is also telling of the fact that the Customs did not seek any particular expertise in its Indoor recruits; because candidates were required to be between the ages of nineteen and twenty-three the vast majority had not seriously pursued an alternative career before applying to the Customs and, for those who *had* worked (thirty-five), their experience bore little relation to the work they would perform in the Customs. Some had worked as secretaries and clerks (sixteen)—helpful in preparing them for the administrative duties which would form the core of their work in the Customs—and a fair number had served in the armed forces (twenty-three), but none had any particular knowledge of Customs work. For four men in my sample the Customs was a fall-back career after studying for and being rejected by either the consular service or the ICS.

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[99] Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, p. 17 and p. 170. On the school and university education of SPS officers also see Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism*, Chapter Three, 'Manly Chaps in Control: Blues and Blacks in the Sudan'.

[100] Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, J. O. P. Bland papers, J. O. P. Bland's unpublished memoir, Chapter One, p. 1. At the time he received his Customs nomination Bland had just begun his studies at Trinity College Dublin.

[101] See Perry Anderson, 'A Belated Encounter: Perry Anderson retraces his father's career in the Chinese Customs Service', *London Review of Books* (30 July 1998), p. 6.

Although the family origins of Indoor men were similar to those of recruits to the China consular service, they diverged in respect to their previous employment. One result of the generally higher age on appointment of consular officers was that most had previous employment experience and a large number had worked for trading houses in the Far East and India before joining. A lack of skills particularly useful to the Customs was, however, by no means prejudicial to a Service career. Relatively blank slates such as these were, in fact, coveted by the Inspectorate; young men with limited working experience and no intellectual specialisms could easily be socialised into a Customs ethos and moulded in the Service's image.

The Outdoor, Marine and technical staffs

Outdoor and Marine employees had very different expectations of the Service from the beginning of their careers. As we have seen, employment in these branches of the Customs most often stood for a short chapter in the midst of a transitory life rather than a long career. Building a socio-economic profile of these employees is, moreover, a difficult task. Because the vast majority of Outdoor and Marine men were appointed on-the-spot in China they did not undergo a formal recruitment procedure and so the application forms which are such a rich source of information about the pre-Customs lives of Indoor Staff are missing for these employees. A rough picture of the socio-economic background of the nineteenth-century Outdoor Staff can be sketched from a sample of 250 memos of service of Outdoor men who were stationed at Shanghai at some point during their careers before 1887.[102] Although a less comprehensive source of information than the Indoor Staff application forms—particulars of education and fathers' occupations, for example, are not recorded—they do provide details of place-of-birth and previous employment. They also present a representative national mix, encompassing 138 British (including Irish) employees, thirty-five Americans, thirty-three Germans, nine Swedes, seven Frenchmen, and a sprinkling of other nationalities. Concentrating first on the regional origins of the 138 British employees in this sample, the most arresting discrepancy with the Indoor Staff candidates is that, whereas over one quarter of British and Irish Indoor applicants were born in the non-Western world, this was only the case for thirteen of the 138 nineteenth-century Outdoor staff. Evidently, the family traditions of overseas service which ran strong in the professional middle-classes were largely absent amongst the working- and lower middle-class families whose sons were attracted to the Outdoor Staff. Emigration to the dominions was fervently promoted to this sector of society from the mid-nineteenth century, and *settlement* in empire for working- and lower middle-class Britons was increasingly common, but patterns of a lengthy overseas career ultimately ending with retirement at 'home' was rarely an available option.[103]

To say that the lives of Outdoor men did not follow the Indoor pattern of professional overseas careers is not, however, to say that they were ignorant of or had

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[102] Sample taken from CSA, 679(9) 3019, 'Memo. of service collected to 31 December 1887, members of foreign Outdoor Staff, Shanghai'.

[103] For an overview of migration patterns from Britain to the colonies see Stephen Constantine, 'British Emigration to the Empire-Commonwealth since 1880: From Overseas Settlement to Diaspora?', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 31, no. 2 (May 2003), pp. 16-35.

no prior contact with the non-Western world. The previous occupations of 199 of the sample of 250 nineteenth-century Outdoor men are recorded and, of these, over half (102) had formerly worked as seamen, either as master mariners, mates or ship stewards. Like A. H. Rasmussen, who before joining the Customs at the age of twenty-four had already worked on a voyage to Brazil and Mexico and had stopped for a sojourn in Ceylon en route for Hong Kong, many Outdoor men had journeyed far and wide in the course of their former work. William F. Tyler, who became Customs Coast Inspector in 1899, had travelled to Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, before ending up in China in 1899.[104] Christopher Briggs, who joined the Marine Department in 1932, was even more widely travelled; his mercantile marine career took him to South Africa, Australia, South America, Japan and Canada.[105] Although working in the Customs and living in China was usually the most prolonged contact with a non-Western culture experienced by these men, brief encounters with the non-Western world would have certainly been familiar. The high proportion of Outdoor men who had previously worked at sea is also telling in a different sense. Unlike Indoor recruits, employment experience relevant to their new jobs was a highly desirable asset in Outdoor men. In fact, forty-one of this sample, over one fifth of all men for whom their former occupations are known (199), had prior experience of Customs work, with thirty-nine of these having previously worked in the Chinese Customs itself. The Inspectorate evidently felt no compunction about re-employing Outdoor men who had previously proved dissatisfied with or disloyal to the Service by leaving to pursue more lucrative employment prospects elsewhere. As these men had previous Customs experience and therefore required no training, and were in any case not expected to pursue long careers in the Customs, the Inspectorate was more than willing to overlook their apparent lack of commitment to the Service.

This pattern of employing seasoned seamen who were knowledgeable about marine work and who had experience of working in the non-Western world continued into the twentieth century. A smaller sample of Outdoor and Marine employees, compiled from the application forms of thirty-five men recruited 1883-1926, comprising four Lighthouse Mechanics, eight Tidewaiters, six Engineers, fourteen Officers, two Clerks of Work, and one diver, shows that the profile of an average Marine or Outdoor employee changed little throughout the official period of foreign

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[104] See Tyler, *Pulling Strings in China*, Chapter One, 'Early Days', pp. 1-29.
[105] Christopher Briggs, *Hai Kuan: The Sea Gate* (Carlisle WA, 1997), pp. 12-70.

recruitment.[106] Like their nineteenth-century counterparts, almost half of this sample (fifteen) had previously worked as marine officers, masters and mates. Specific skills and work experience were clearly desirable qualities in candidates for these branches; all ten of the Engineers and Mechanics in this sample, for example, had former experience of engineering. Furthermore, although familial working patterns of careers in the empire world were rare, Outdoor and Marine men had often arrived in China in the course of pursuing family seafaring traditions; of the sample of thirty-five men, the fathers' occupations of twenty-nine are known, and eight of these worked in maritime professions, ranging from naval architect to master mariner to marine engineer. Childhood contact with the maritime world could entice many into a seafaring career, as Rasmussen testified. In his first memoir, *Sea Fever*, Rasmussen reminisced about the annual visits of his father's friend, Captain Fabritius, who sparked his enthralment with the sea at the age of five. From then on, he recalled, 'in fine weather I would sit for hours watching the ships going out, sick with longing. I never paid any attention to the inward bound ships; it was those outward bound I watched until they disappeared in the narrows by Dröbak'. In spite of his father's opposition, Rasmussen's fascination with the seafaring life developed into a steely determination to go to sea, a dream which was fulfilled by his first voyage at the age of fourteen.[107] For Rasmussen, and perhaps for many others, a romantic picture of the seafaring life formed during his early years matured into a resolution to go to sea which ultimately led to employment in the Customs.

From study of the fathers' occupations of the candidates in this sample it becomes clear that these men occupied a very different socio-economic *milieu* to their Indoor counterparts in their pre-Customs lives. Working in a wide spectrum of occupations, from agricultural labourer to warehouseman to builder and decorator, the majority of Outdoor and Marine recruits came from a distinctly working-class background. A sizable minority, however, also came from more prosperous families; the fathers of four were shopkeepers and others worked as accountants and civil engineers, a trend which reflects the high number of engineers and mechanics, who usually came from more affluent backgrounds, in this sample. The educational experiences of Outdoor and Marine men also highlight this socio-economic disparity

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[106] Sample taken from CSA, file nos. 679(2) 1593; 679(2) 1599-1612; 679(3) 1621-1624; 'London Office; dispatches to IG'.
[107] A. H. Rasmussen, *Sea Fever* (London, 1960), p.14 and p.16.

between the Indoor and Outdoor Staffs. All but one of the men in this sample attended state- or council-run board schools, and occasionally church-funded schools, and the vast majority left school at the age of fourteen or fifteen after obtaining a basic secondary education. Providing they had a basic grasp of English and arithmetic, the subjects essential to carrying out their work, the educational standard achieved by Outdoor and Marine men was of little concern to the Inspectorate.

As with recruitment procedures, the most dramatic transformation of the socio-economic profile of the Outdoor Staff came with the upsurge in Japanese recruitment between 1938 and 1944. What is more, whereas detailed records of Outdoor applications were not usually kept prior to the 1930s, in the Japanese recruitment drive of the late-1930s detailed applications forms were filled in by each candidate. This section uses data from a sample of forty such application forms of Japanese Tidewaiters recruited between 1936 and 1940.[108] Most conspicuously, it emerges from this sample that the educational background and achievements of these Japanese Tidewaiters was usually far superior to that of their European counterparts. Whereas the British and European men in my sample of thirty-five twentieth-century Outdoor and Marine men usually left school after ten years of education or at the age of fourteen, Japanese candidates stayed in full-time education for at least eleven years (eleven of the sample), with a large number being educated for fourteen years (nine candidates), and some even staying at school for seventeen years (three). Furthermore, whilst only one of the European recruits had taken university classes, eight of the forty Japanese Tidewaiters had attended university, three had attended foreign language classes, and another eight had attended technical, commercial or mercantile marine schools. Japanese Outdoor Staff in the late 1930s and early 1940s were, then, decidedly better educated than their European colleagues.

The previous employment of these Japanese recruits also points to their higher educational and professional status as compared with Western Outdoor men. Many had prior experience of administrative and policing work; five of this sample had previously been employed in the Japanese Customs, reaching the examining and appraising ranks, another eight had worked in the Japanese police force, and a further six had been employed by the Shanghai Municipal Police before switching to the Customs. Those with experience in skilled and, occasionally, professional jobs were

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[108] Sample taken from CSA files 679(1) 15038; 679(1) 15039; 679(1) 15040; 679(1) 15044; 'Recruitment of Japanese Officers'.

conspicuous, with four having begun careers in the Japanese civil service and others having worked in such diverse occupations as teaching, editing a Tokyo publication (*The German Review*), and interpreting for the Japanese army. The Inspectorate had bemoaned the poor educational and social standard of its Outdoor men for decades, yet it was only with intensive Japanese recruitment in the late 1930s that a very different social, as well as national, dynamic was introduced to the Outdoor ranks.

The gulf between the socio-economic environments occupied by the Indoor Staff and the Outdoor and Marine Staffs in their pre-Customs lives is not so remarkable given the different types of work performed by each branch and the value attached to each body of staff by the Inspectorate. These class and status divisions were perpetuated and accentuated in the working world of the Customs. In spite of its apparent commitment to creating a 'cosmopolitan' workforce, the Customs staff was structured around entrenched hierarchies based on class and race. In terms of the social and financial benefits accrued from working in it, the Indoor Staff, always styled as the elite, executive arm of the Service, was worlds apart from the 'outdoor' branches of the Customs. Whereas a Watcher appointed in 1917 received monthly wages of only *haikuan taels* 50, a Fourth Assistant B entering the Service in 1922 received a starting salary that was three times larger, at *haikuan taels* 150 per month.[109] In the strictly hierarchical locale of China's foreign communities, where status distinctions were fiercely guarded, the socio-economic background of Customs men and their rank in the Service assigned them a particular place in treaty port society which would colour their entire experience of living and working in China.

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[109] *Haikuan taels* was the Customs Service currency in which all Customs duties and wages were usually paid.

Conclusion

In spite of Hart's frequent sermonising about the importance of 'character' in Indoor recruits, the Service was in many ways very practical when making appointments. It aimed to employ men who were intellectually able, could demonstrate aptitude for Customs work and who could adapt easily to life in China, yet it did not seek applicants of an outstanding quality. As Hart instructed Campbell in 1877, 'we do not propose to take the lowest offer' but neither did the Customs 'propose to give the appointments to the best answerers'.[110] In the Indoor Staff especially, the Customs wanted men who would easily learn the Service's way of working, who would readily accept their place within the Customs hierarchy, and who would absorb and promote Customs philosophies. Young men who were too confident of the strength of their intellectual capabilities or who demonstrated too much individual flair were deemed unsuited to the Customs world of obedience, administration and efficiency. When recruiting for the Outdoor, Coast, and Marine Staffs, practical concerns were even more important and men with seafaring experience or relevant technical knowledge were the preferred choices.

The recruitment experience was also the first stage in the making of a Customs man, and in moulding a cadre of Customs men. For the Indoor Staff, the Inspectorate carefully handpicked young men who could be easily fashioned into a body of proficient administrators who would establish the Service's standing amongst other overseas administrative services. The Indoor Staff was the elite branch of the Service and the competency and social respectability of its members would secure its international reputation for professionalism. Little effort was expended in selecting junior Outdoor and Marine men, however. Viewed by the Inspectorate as dispensable components of the Customs workforce, minimal time and money was invested in their recruitment. In doing so the Inspectorate ensured that Outdoor men were seldom entirely committed to working in the Customs. The low value attached to Outdoor employees, which was detectable even at the recruitment stage, was not conducive to long careers.

In truth, it is remarkable how awkwardly Customs men employed in all branches fit into common assumptions of the type of man who worked in the colonial world. In fact, their ordinariness is conspicuous. These men were neither budding

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[110] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 1, letter Z/45, 15 February 1877, p. 238.

colonists, nor illustrious governors, nor errant adventurers, but were rather men looking for reliable work. China and the Customs was not such an unusual choice for a middle-class man well-versed in the career opportunities available to him in the empire world, or for a well-travelled seaman who found himself without a job in China. Furthermore, the very different pre-Customs lives and career trajectories of Indoor and Outdoor men highlight the diverse composition of the foreign staff, not only as regards its much-lauded multinationalism but also in terms of the socio-economic profile of these men. The Customs Service, and the foreign treaty port world more broadly, had its prominent personalities and transients, those who occupied centre stage and those who lived on the margins, and represented a broad spectrum of society amongst its ranks. The appeal of empire, and of China, was far-reaching and in the staff of a multinational service such as the Customs, the whole range of people for whom the non-Western world spoke of opportunity was represented.

Chapter Two

Working lives: Building a Career in the Customs

In 1919 Philip Hiram Everhart, an American Assistant in the Indoor Staff since 1914 stationed in Samshui, resigned in disgrace after assaulting a Chinese clerk during an office argument. The Commissioner pleaded mitigating circumstances for Everhart, who had experienced strong feelings of alienation since his arrival in Samshui as the only foreign Assistant in the office:

> He has never taken kindly to Samshui, and all along has wished to be transferred to another port. Sometimes his health has not been very good. He has suffered from sleeplessness caused largely by the intolerable noises at night coming from the harbour and foreshore under his bedroom window. When so afflicted he has been irritable and very suspicious, and I fear that has affected his good relations with the staff, so that I have had to intervene several times.[1]

Previously, his Commissioner had consistently noted Everhart's restlessness and unhappiness in Samshui.[2] More troubling for the Inspectorate were reports of his arrogant and belligerent conduct towards his Chinese colleagues. In any case, the IG allowed Everhart to make an easy exit from the Service, permitting him to resign rather than carry the stigma of dismissal in his post-Customs life. Some individuals such as Everhart found that they were fundamentally unsuited to the Customs working environment from the beginning of their time in the Service. Expatriate life could be hard and alienating and Service misfits who were unable to adapt to the Customs mindset and working conditions did not last long. Work in empire and its outposts often failed to live up to initial expectations and colonial careers were often coloured by feelings of disaffection, and even despair.[3]

This chapter will examine the foreign staff in the context of their working worlds. Rather than scrutinising the minutiae of Customs work I will consider the *experience* of being a Customs employee during working hours, and how different working experiences contributed to the success or failure of Service careers. In particular, this chapter will explore the working conditions, career prospects and challenges and the social and political obstacles faced by Customs men when performing their work. Anthony Kirk-Greene has observed that the question '*how* did

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[1] CSA, 679(1) 10839, 'Mr. Philip Hiram Everhart's career'. Report by Samshui acting Commissioner W. Macdonald on the assault case, 21 November 1919.
[2] CSA, 679(1) 10839, 'Mr. Philip Hiram Everhart's career'. Everhart's confidential report for 1918, for example, observed that 'since coming to Samshui Mr. Everhart has been somewhat restive. Naturally he feels the loneliness here, and I think he would like to be transferred'.
[3] See, for example, Eves and Thomas, *Bad Colonists*.

the DO [District Officer] achieve what he was expected, and had consciously and conscientiously undertaken, to do', has not always been posed in histories of colonial rule.[4] Whereas much scholarly energy has been devoted to studying both the intricacies of colonial policy and the philosophies and ideologies of empire, the issue of how these policies and principles played out in the everyday working world of the imperial administrator is often neglected. In Chapter One I outlined the personal and professional qualities sought in new recruits to the Service. It was in the practical working world of the Customs that the value of these qualities became clear. The ease with which staff employed their resourcefulness, obedience and sense of duty when performing Customs work was usually reflected in the success of their careers. Furthermore, the working efficiency of the Service and the ability of staff to withstand the challenges of their working lives is telling of the success or failure of efforts to create a recognisable Service ethos amongst employees. Commitment to the Customs' mission and wholehearted endorsement of its principles helped many to endure the social, physical and material hardships that sometimes accompanied a Customs career.

Conversely, just as imperial rhetoric did not always translate well into the practicalities of a colonial posting, it was difficult to hold fast to the founding principles of the Service in certain situations. Although the Inspectorate sermonised about the need for steadfast duty, for benign cosmopolitanism, for disinterested service and for obedience, in reality it was frequently difficult for Customs men to adhere to these values. The Customs working world was the stage on which the numerous tensions which lay beneath the surface of Customs cosmopolitanism were played out while the men had to try and stick to their scripts. In the course of Customs work, staff needed to negotiate and evade conflicts with foreign and Chinese merchants, Chinese and foreign officials, local communities, and with other branches or individuals within the Service. Moreover, the very nature of their anomalous position in China, as foreign workers of the Chinese government, produced numerous confusions and conflicts which sometimes rendered the application of Customs work problematic.

This chapter, then, will examine how the Inspectorate's policies were interpreted, implemented and challenged at a local level. Firstly, I will consider the

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[4] Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, p. 274.

ways in which Customs recruits were socialised into their new working environment and how they learned to become Customs men. Secondly, I will explore the internal working world of the Customs; the regional idiosyncrasies of various custom houses and the obstacles faced by the Service in certain ports, the hierarchies and policies of promotion and transfer which structured the careers of the foreign staff, and how the politics of nationality and race manifested themselves in the foreign staff. Thirdly, I will look at the Customs in its wider context, examining its relationships and interactions with Chinese local communities and merchants, Chinese officials, and representatives of foreign power in China. Building a picture of the working world of the Customs will lead to a closer understanding of what it meant to live through a career in the Service and the benefits, challenges and uncertainties that this entailed. It will also shed much light upon the occasional dramas and everyday tedium, and the personal failures and successes, which characterised colonial careers across the empire world.

1) Fitting into the Customs world

Accounts of initial experiences in the Customs are invariably couched in the discourse of adventure and exploration common in travel-writing and literature about empire in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[5] In 1954, for example, A. H. Rasmussen rather nostalgically recalled his thoughts and expectations on joining the Outdoor Staff in 1905:

> The strange new life I had entered, the fascination of the Orient, the colour and glamour of the teeming street and harbour life, satisfied me completely. All was new and fresh and wonderful. There was something else, too, which added spice to my enjoyment of these new experiences. Shanghai was only a recruiting centre for this vast Empire, and sooner or later I could expect to be transferred to one of the many widely scattered stations from Harbin near the Siberian border in the north, to Mengtsz [Mengzi] near the Burma frontier in the south... This delightful uncertainty about where I might eventually go, ran like a strong undercurrent through my thoughts as I savoured the new life.[6]

W. F. Tyler, who joined the Marine Department as a third officer in 1889, also related the story of his early years in the Customs assigned to preventive work in terms of adventurous exploits, reminiscing about the 'narrow bays overshadowed by high hills and sooty darkness, where I lay in wait like a spider for its fly.'[7] In retrospect, it seems, the world of revenue-collecting took on a more colourful character than might be expected in the minds of former Customs employees.

Journals kept by Customs men at the time, however, give a much less romantic picture of the early years in the Customs. For Willard Straight, who joined the Indoor Staff in 1901, the work quickly became tedious:

> As a career plus the satisfaction of working for the work's sake I doubt its usefulness... The work is done in a routine way and requires only clerical ability until one becomes a Commissioner or an Assistant-in-Charge and is given the responsibility for the port. With luck it might be attractive; without luck or a pull it is a damned drudge. I myself am content to wait and play the game, watching my luck which has always held good. But the Service will never be my life nor success in the Service my aim.'[8]

J. O. P. Bland, too, summed up his work at his first Customs posting in Hankou in one word: 'monotonous'.[9] Initial expectations of exciting new experiences were often

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[5] See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, for an analysis of how travel books engaged the European reading public in expansionist enterprises. See Castle, 'Imperial Legacies, New Frontiers', for children's literature about empire from the 1920s onwards. Also, Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*. For popular literature about China see Bickers, *Britain in China*, Chapter Two, 'China in Britain and the British Imagination', pp. 22-66.

[6] Rasmussen, *China Trader*, p. 4.

[7] Tyler, *Pulling Strings in China*, p. 32.

[8] The journals are quoted in Herbert Croly, *Willard Straight* (New York, 1924), p. 116.

[9] J. O. P. Bland, unpublished memoir, Chapter Two, 'Hankow in the Eighties', p. 4.

tempered by the mundane realities of working for the Customs. Neither did most new recruits have such fanciful expectations of their future work. Many men in all branches entertained much more prosaic aims of career success and establishing a life and home in China on joining the Customs. Christopher Briggs, who joined the crew of a patrol ship in 1931, saw in the Customs an opportunity to escape the long periods at sea required of his former work in the mercantile marine and a chance to settle down; 'The future I saw was, a reasonable salary at last, the chance to bring my wife and child out to China and make a home together, and finally the chance to give up going on long voyages forever,' he recalled.[10]

The initial success or failure of Customs careers depended on a variety of factors—personal self-confidence, individual aims and expectations, the existence of support networks of family and friends, contemporary political events, and geographical location all affected early experiences of work in China. Above all, new arrivals were required to acclimatise to their new surroundings if they were to secure lasting careers. Socialisation, the process by which new arrivals adapted to and adopted certain political, social and cultural attitudes, values, and practices in order to integrate fully into their new locale, was something that new arrivals in all societies and organisations were required to undergo. In the colonial context, however, the process of socialisation was usually heightened and intensified—recruits to overseas or colonial services, who were entering a very different culture and society, simply had much more to learn about their new working and social environments. Central to the acclimatisation process was the socialisation of new recruits into a specific service working environment and ethos.[11] The extent of the Inspectorate's power to socialise newcomers into a clear Customs mindset and to nurture the development of *esprit de corps* amongst its staff, as well as the personal abilities of new recruits to fit into Customs hierarchies and systems, often determined the initial success and eventual length of Customs careers.

Anthony Kirk-Greene has argued that in imperial administrative services, 'the element of class became not that of family, the primary context of English class, but of class formation, of elitist moulding: not of birth but of nurturing—and the very

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[10] Christopher Briggs, *The Sea Gate*, p. 72.

[11] J. A. Mangan has termed this explicit and aggressive form of socialisation into a colonial mindset as 'enculturation'. See J. A. Mangan (ed.), *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialisation and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1990), p. 3.

term involves a high degree of express engineering and deliberate elite formation'.[12] In the foreign Indoor staff, however, explicit and organised attempts by the Inspectorate to mould its men into a committed and elite corps of professional administrators are conspicuous by their absence. Formal training for foreign Indoor recruits in Customs work and philosophies was, for example, never developed, despite the creation of a Customs College in Beijing in 1908 to train Chinese candidates. Although training for new recruits to all overseas services was lacking in the nineteenth century, in this respect the Customs lagged behind its colonial counterparts in the twentieth century.[13] A two-month training course for recruits to the Tropical African Services was inaugurated at the Imperial Institute in London in 1908, teaching law, tropical hygiene, surveying, accounting and tropical produce.[14] Under the professionalising impetus of R. D. Furse this course was replaced by two terms at Oxford or Cambridge in 1926 and rebranded as the Devonshire Course in 1932.[15] Befitting its reputation as the elite of overseas administrative services, the ICS training programme for new recruits was extensive, involving a one-year training course at Oxford, Cambridge or the University of London, which taught Indian history, law, and languages in addition to practical skills such as riding, followed by a three month socialisation period at a settlement camp in India.[16] By comparison, all that new appointees to the Customs Indoor staff could hope for by way of training was a few months of language study before taking up their posts. Bland reminisced nostalgically about the summer of 1883 that he and other new arrivals spent learning Mandarin with 'patient and courteous Chinese teachers' in Beijing's Western Hills, an interlude which he described as 'a picnic of the rarest kind'.[17] Rigorous training in Customs work was, however, non-existent.

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[12] Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, p. 9.

[13] The exception was the British consular service, in which training was non-existent in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century attempts to inaugurate a consular training system failed. See Platt, *Cinderella Service*, p. 26 and p. 79.

[14] Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, pp. 132-3.

[15] For the content of the post-1932 Colonial Administrative Service training course see Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of Authority*, Chapter Three, 'Training for the Colonial Service', pp. 42-59.

[16] Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, pp. 102-4. In the period 1922-37 recruits were required to spend two years on a training course and during the period 1941-47 the location of the course moved to Dehra Dun.

[17] J. O. P. Bland, unpublished memoir, Chapter One, '*Quo Fata Vocant*', p. 8. Learning a language also formed the bulk of training in the SPS—new recruits were required to spend eighteen months at Oxford or Cambridge studying Arabic before proceeding to their posts. After 1918 this course was reduced to three months of study at SOAS—for which recruits were provided with a grant—and anthropology, mapping and first aid were added to the syllabus. Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, pp. 183-4.

***Table 2.1*- Revenue Department staff structure**

Revenue Department		
Headed by Commissioner		
Indoor Staff	**Outdoor Staff**	**Coast Staff**
Commissioner	Tidesurveyor	Commander
Deputy Commissioner	Deputy Tidesurveyor	First Officer
Chief Assistant	Chief Appraiser	Second Officer
First Assistant (grades A and B)	Appraiser (grades A and B)	Third Officer
Second Assistant (grades A and B)	Boat Officer (grades A and B)	First Engineer
Third Assistant (grades A and B)	Chief Examiner	Second Engineer
Fourth Assistant (grades A and B)	Examiner (grades A and B)	Third Engineer
Chinese Writers (*shupan*) and Clerks	Assistant Examiner (grades A and B)	Gunners
	Senior Tidewaiter	
	First Class Tidewaiter	
	Second Class Tidewaiter	
	Third Class Tidewaiter	
	Fourth Class Tidewaiter	
	Watcher	

This lack of training provisions for the Indoor Staff was the result of a particular Service structure and mindset. The Indoor Staff was strictly hierarchical and a large part of the socialisation process for junior Assistants involved adjusting to their specific place within their branch. The structure of the Indoor Staff changed little during the Foreign Inspectorate's lifespan; the basic staff in each port was composed, from the bottom rank upwards, of clerks, various grades of Assistants, the Deputy Commissioner and the Commissioner (see *table 2.1*). A body of Chinese Writers, or *Shupan*, who translated and transcribed documents worked alongside the Assistants. As entrants to the Service occupied very junior positions, and were not required to make important decisions or exhibit any particular individual flair until reaching the posts of Chief Assistant or Deputy Commissioner, Indoor men gradually accumulated knowledge of Service work and philosophies as they moved up through the ranks of Assistants. By way of contrast, ICS probationary officers and CAS cadets were expected to learn how to shoulder a great deal of responsibility early on in their careers. Although new recruits were placed under the tutelage of a seasoned DO, their superior officers often realised that 'benign neglect could be a kind of hands-off tuition', forcing juniors into the habit of making independent decisions.[18]

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[18] Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of Authority*, p. 70. See Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes*, for case studies of two ICS men and the responsibilities they assumed in their work. Colonial officials in the Malay States

In the CCS, inexperienced Assistants were able to turn to their immediate superiors for advice, meaning that little training was required.[19]

There were few opportunities for junior Assistants to step outside their position in the established professional hierarchy, and those who did so were apt to be regarded disapprovingly by their superiors. C. S. Archer's novel, *China Servant*, took a cynical view of the Inspectorate's insistence on absolute obedience of one's superiors. The beginning sees the novel's protagonist, a wayward Assistant, Peter Yule, embark upon a one-man crusade to serve China by sinking an artesian well in the notoriously unhealthy station of Mirs Bay. Yule's Commissioner and the Inspectorate were unenthusiastic about his project, yet he foolishly and deliberately went over his Commissioner's head. The price of his defiance was a transfer to the undesirable backwater of Wuchow instead of his expected promotion to the position of Preventive Deputy in Kowloon.[20] In reality, the repercussions of disobedience were unlikely to be so severe, yet wilfulness was undoubtedly frowned upon by the Inspectorate. To cite one case, R. M. A. Poinsot, in the Indoor Staff 1925-31, was reported from the beginning of his employment in Swatow (Shantou) as being 'slightly headstrong' and it was suggested that he 'would be better in a port with a stricter discipline than is possible to enforce here'. Subsequent reports were more damning, describing him as 'irrepressible' and 'over-bearing' and reporting that Poinsot complained that there was 'no incentive to take an interest in his work'.[21] Many others like Poinsot found the Customs world of hierarchy, obedience and administration restrictive and soon left the professional confines of the Indoor Staff for more promising careers.[22]

Paradoxically, however, whilst reconciling themselves to their junior position in the Indoor Staff, new recruits were also made well aware of their elite position in the Customs staff as a whole and their superior worth in relation to other branches. A 1922 booklet issued to all new Assistants stressed the crucial role played by those

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were also isolated and often virtually autonomous in their remote postings. See Gullick, *Rulers and Residents*.

[19] This system was in may ways similar to that which operated in the British consular service in China. Junior Assistants did not receive any rounded training in their duties, but instead began their careers performing basic tasks and gradually accumulated knowledge as they rose through the ranks. Coates, *China Consuls*, p. 81.

[20] C. S. Archer, *China Servant* (London, 1946).

[21] CSA, 679(9) 1798, 'Confidential reports of employees withdrawn from service in 1931, M-S', confidential reports on R. M. A Poinsot, 1925-31.

[22] Willard Straight, for example, left the Customs after only two years to become a Reuters correspondent. Croly, *Willard Straight*, p. 116.

'pioneers' who in the early years of the Service had carried out 'the spade work by which the foundations were laid'.[23] Unlike recruits to other branches of the Service, new Assistants were made aware that they were expected to continue to build upon these foundations through their commitment to the Customs cause. Outdoor Staff, on the other hand, were conscious of their inferior position in the Service hierarchy from their first days in the Customs. L. C. Arlington, an American who worked in the Outdoor Staff 1886-1905 and the Postal Service 1906-29, bitterly observed that 'the Indoor Staff were treated like Commissars, and the Outdoor like the proletariat', and his views were echoed in the early experiences of other Outdoor men.[24] Despite the fact that they performed the work which lay at the core of the Customs' responsibilities—examining and valuing cargoes, preventive work, and control of shipping—the Inspectorate itself was often dismissive of the value of its Outdoor Staff. As a result, the preferential treatment of their Indoor counterparts was a recurrent source of frustration and anger for Outdoor men. As early as 1867 Hart himself recognised this inequality, acknowledging that 'hitherto, the members of the out-door department have been serving on an unsatisfactory footing, and that seemingly, they were but little cared for, and their services but lightly valued'. Although Hart claimed that he intended to give the Outdoor branch 'standing and security', Outdoor men never were granted a professional status commensurate with that of their Indoor colleagues, and complaints of unfair treatment continued to be sounded until the end of the Inspectorate's days.[25] Given the lack of value attached to Outdoor work it is unsurprising that the Inspectorate was reluctant to invest in any form of systematic training for its Outdoor recruits.

Although the structure of the Outdoor Staff was periodically revised, for most of the Foreign Inspectorate's lifespan it was comprised, from the bottom rank upwards, of Watchers, various classes of Tidewaiters, several grades of Examiners and Appraisers, Boat Officers, and Tidesurveyors (see *table 2.1*). Like their

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[23] *The Origin and Organisation of the Chinese Customs Service* (Shanghai: Statistical Department, 1922), p. 6.

[24] Arlington, *Through the Dragon's Eyes*, p. 121. Rasmussen, too, commented that on joining the Outdoor Staff he 'had put my foot on the very lowest rung of the social ladder'. Rasmussen, *China Trader*, p. 5.

[25] *Documents Illustrative*, vol. I, circular no. 14 of 1867 (first series), 'Out-door staff, organization and distribution of'. The most obvious manifestation of this discontent was the Customs Outdoor Staff union, formed in Shanghai in 1919 with the aim of securing better working conditions, a retirement scheme and increased benefits. For more detailed information on the union see Chapter Three and CSA, 679(1) 17142 and 679(1) 17143, 'Case of Mr. H. Wyatt, Chief Examiner, and formation of Customs Out-door Staff Union, Shanghai 1919'.

colleagues in the Indoor Staff, junior Watchers and Tidewaiters gradually expanded their knowledge of Customs work as they moved slowly up through the Outdoor ranks. Great importance was attached to this method of training through long experience. Debating a proposed reorganisation of the Outdoor Staff in 1930 Staff Secretary Prettejohn asserted that 'several years' service as a "Tidewaiter" is essential for the moulding and disciplining of the junior officer', and resisted proposals which would disrupt this.[26] Even more so than Assistants, the Inspectorate considered that Outdoor recruits needed a long period of initiation into Customs work and principles before they could be trusted in more responsible positions.

Unlike the Indoor Staff, however, no attempt was made to inculcate a sense of their worth to the broader Customs project in Outdoor recruits. Viewed by the Inspectorate as unreliable and expendable, most men were not induced to stay in the Service for long careers. Of the 168 Watchers appointed in 1905, for example, seventy-five withdrew from service within one year of joining and a further twenty-two left during their second year of service. As C. E. Temlett (in the Outdoor Staff 1925-49) phrased it, Outdoor men were 'the dead-end boys' career-wise.[27] Most realised the limitations of their new employment from the start and after a short stay in the Customs many Outdoor men quickly moved on to employment which could offer them brighter futures.

This pattern of short-term careers was mirrored in the Marine Department (see *table 2.2*), Coast Staff (see *table 2.1*) and Works Department, albeit for different reasons.[28] Men joining the Marine Department and other specialised and technical branches of the Customs, such as the River Inspectorate and Coast Staff, entered a very different world from that of the Indoor and Outdoor Staffs. The work they performed, employed variously, in the case of the Marine Department and Coast Staff, in anti-smuggling work, maintaining aids to navigation, meteorological work and coastal and riverine surveying and, in the case of the Works Department—first

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[26] CSA, 679(9) 2424, 'Mr. H. E. Prettejohn's report on Out-door Staff reorganization and comments, May 1930'. Prettejohn was reacting to proposals that the Outdoor staff be divided into examining and executive branches. Examiners would then be appointed directly to the examining branch, skipping the Tidewaiter ranks, whereas Tidewaiters would work themselves up through the executive branch to eventually become Boat Officers.

[27] Interview with C. E. Temlett, BBC, 'The Lion and the Dragon', p. 2.

[28] Although the Coast Staff was, along with the Indoor and Outdoor Staffs, a branch of the Revenue Department, it was nearer to the Marine Department in terms of the work they performed and the type of men it employed. In 1930 the Preventive Department, employing River Police and preventive officers engaged solely in anti-smuggling work, was founded.

organised in 1912 and abolished in 1930[29]—in engineering and planning and surveying building works, was fundamentally separate from that of the Indoor and Outdoor branches of the Revenue Department. Furthermore, as bodies of technical experts these branches were often granted more independence from port Commissioners. Although the head of the Marine Department, the Coast Inspector[30], was in theory responsible to the Shanghai Commissioner, in view of the Commissioner's lack of technical expertise the Coast Inspector was granted a large degree of de facto autonomy, as was the River Inspectorate, created in 1906 to improve navigation on the Yangzi.[31]

***Table 2.2*- Marine Department staff structure**

Marine Department (created 1881)				
Headed by Coast Inspector				
Lights Staff	**Harbour Staff**	**Marine Staff**	**River Police**	**River Inspectorate (created 1906)**
Chief Lightkeeper	Harbour Master	Engineer-in- Chief	Inspector	River Inspector
First Class Lightkeeper	Assistant Harbour Master	Engineer	Sergeants	Assistant River Inspector
Second Class Lightkeeper	First Berthing Officer	Assistant Engineer	Constables	District River Inspector
Third Class Lightkeeper	Second Berthing Officer	Mechanics		Marine Clerk
	Third Berthing Officer	Boatman		Signalman
	Signalman			Boatman

The employees of the Marine Department and the Coast Staff, as bodies of technically-trained men for whom the greater part of their work took place at sea or on the Yangzi, came into little contact with members of the Outdoor and Indoor Staff in the course of their work. This was also true of the Lights Staff, a branch of the Marine Department which was in other respects qualitatively different from the other branches in the department. Unlike other Marine and Coast employees, Lightkeepers were unskilled and untrained and employment in this branch was paid the least, and carried the least status, of all foreign-staffed positions in the Service. Stationed in remote lighthouses, Lightkeepers led isolated lives which placed them outside the

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[29] In 1930 all engineering functions were taken over by the Marine Department and architectural work by the Inspectorate General. The Works Department was headed by the Engineer-in-Chief and employed engineers, architects and clerks.

[30] When the Marine Department was first created in 1868 a Marine Commissioner was appointed at its head. After the department was disbanded in 1870 and then reformed in 1881 its head was renamed the Coast Inspector.

[31] CSA, 6791) 1027, 'History of the Upper Yangtze River Inspectorate'.

reach of Inspectorate attempts at socialisation. According to his biographer, lighthouse mechanic Bill Scott quickly came to the conclusion that 'lightkeepers were "mostly crazy anyway" because of the isolation'.[32] Other Marine Department employees and Works Department staff, as men engaged on short-term contracts who were set apart professionally and organisationally from other branches and were, in any case, not expected to stay for long careers, were also largely exempt from Inspectorate processes of socialisation. Employees such as these, who lived and worked on the peripheries of Service structures and hierarchies, had few opportunities to gain a real sense of Customs purposes and principles.

[32] Ed Gould, *The Lighthouse Philosopher: The Adventures of Bill Scott* (Saanichton, 1976), p, 94.

2) Inside the working world of the Customs

In the junior ranks Customs work was rarely particularly arduous, especially for the Indoor Staff. Standard working hours for Assistants were from ten in the morning to four in the afternoon, allowing for plenty of leisure time, and the clerical work they performed was seldom challenging for those in subordinate roles.[33] The Outdoor Staff and the Marine Department staff had to work harder and longer shifts. In these departments, moreover, the work could be dangerous. According to Scott's biographer, repairing aids to navigation was often hazardous and the mechanics sometimes 'barely missed getting their heads lopped off'.[34] Rough seas were another danger—Scott reported once spending four days stranded in a beacon tower during a storm, resulting in the death of two of his colleagues from exposure—and lighthouses were easy targets for marauding pirates.[35] In some 'outdoor' branches, however, life in the Customs was often a welcome release from the toil of previous occupations. Christopher Briggs, who joined the crew of a patrol ship in 1931, described joining the Service as an opportunity to escape the drudgery of the mercantile marine.[36] Similarly, Jack Blackburn appreciated the undemanding working lifestyle offered by contract work in the Marine Department. 'I am keeping very fit and finding just enough work to do to keep happy—it is much easier than in the Navy, though we do far more time at sea—but I like that', he wrote of his new employment in 1934.[37] Customs work presented different opportunities to different employees, including career security, unchallenging work and the opportunity to settle.

Workloads were, of course, heavier higher up in the ranks; all employees assumed increasing amounts of responsibility as their careers progressed. This was especially true of the Commissioner, the lynchpin around which local operations were held in place, overseeing the regulation of his staff and directing Customs business in his port. Commissioners were expected to provide a model of high-minded commitment to the

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[33] These short working hours can be contrasted with the grueling work schedule of cadets in the Colonial Administrative Service, who often worked eleven hour days. As Kirk-Greene has observed, 'the concept of the weekend was not part of the DO's life'. Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of Authority*, p. 89.
[34] Gould, *Lighthouse Philosopher*, p. 81.
[35] Gould, *Lighthouse Philosopher*, pp. 58-9 and pp. 76-9.
[36] Briggs, *The Sea Gate*. Coast Inspector Tyler, who joined the Marine Department in 1889, saw the Customs as an escape route from the Navy. See Tyler, *Pulling Strings in China*.
[37] SOAS, MS 380628, 'Jack F. Blackburn letters, 1927-41', letter from Blackburn to his mother, Shanghai, 15 June 1934.

Customs for their subordinates to follow and were, moreover, charged with inspiring *esprit de corps* amongst their men.[38]

Their autocracy in the ports renders the Commissioner the closest Customs parallel to the indefatigable figure of the District Officer in colonial administrative services. The generic DO, assuming responsibility for a large geographical area and command of a bewildering array of judicial, policing, fiscal, educational and municipal functions, often in remote postings with minimal direction from the central administration, was required to display a virtuoso talent for leadership and versatility.[39] As Kirk-Greene has observed, thorough training in each of his diverse duties would have been impossible, and the DO's ability to perform his duties therefore rested largely on his self-confidence rather than his expertise; 'His success, his effectiveness, his very ability to do and to be, were basically rooted in the assumption of his authority: I am the DO, *ergo quidque est.* His word was law; he was the law'.[40]

Customs Commissioners held less sway than the average DO, yet they *were* expected to maintain an unswerving influence over their staff. They were helped in this task by the Inspectorate, which bombarded its junior employees with directives outlining the importance of deference to their superiors and of dutiful service of the Customs. An 1877 Indoor Staff handbook is typical in its instruction:

> You shall apply yourself faithfully and diligently to the discharge of your duties; render an unhesitating obedience to the directions of your superiors; and endeavour to promote a proper discipline throughout the Service by a strict adherence to Service rules.[41]

The strictly hierarchical structure of the staff and the rigorous controls on the flow of information between staff and the Inspectorate meant that employees were effectively at their Commissioner's mercy when it came to reports on staff conduct; the rule that any complaints from junior employees must be submitted first to the port

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[38] See *Provisional instructions for the guidance of the In-door Staff,* (Shanghai: Statistical Department, 1877), p. 7. Commissioners were first instructed about their duty to instill *esprit de corps* in junior employees in Hart's 1864 circular outlining the guiding philosophy of the Service. See *Documents Illustrative,* vol. I, circular no. 8 of 1864, p. 42.

[39] For an excellent evocation of the everyday working world of the British District Officer in Africa see Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of Authority*, Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

[40] Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators,* p. 279. Kirk-Greene lists four factors which enabled the DO to perform his duties; 'confidence', 'collaboration' with a native subordinate staff, 'coercion' and 'competence'.

[41] *Provisional Instructions for the Guidance of the In-Door Staff.*

Commissioner was enshrined in Service policy, allowing little scope for airing grievances against the Commissioner to a higher authority.[42]

The confidential report system—which required Commissioners to submit an annual (or sometimes twice-yearly) confidential report on the progress and conduct of each employee to the Inspectorate—also embodied the restraints placed on employees wishing to appeal against the Commissioner's authority and was therefore a particular source of disaffection amongst the foreign personnel. Confidential reports were often attacked by embittered employees who felt that their Commissioners were obstructing their advancement in the Service because of personal enmity. In 1938, for example, the Mengzi Commissioner, Cloarec, requested the removal of Chief Assistant A, H. J. de Garcia, to another port because he was, 'lazy, incompetent, untrustworthy and utterly incapable of assuming responsibility for the all-important post which he now occupies'. As a result of this damning report Garcia was immediately transferred to Fuzhou, issued with an official warning letter, and his expected promotion was withheld.[43] Garcia was outraged at the Inspectorate's unquestioning acceptance of his Commissioner's report, so much so that he travelled all the way to Shanghai to refute the accusations, which he claimed were made 'out of spite and personal feelings disregarding the interest of the service'.[44] In an interview with the Staff Secretary, however, he failed to impress and Garcia was forced to accept his fate, which was to be passed over for promotion until his departure from the Service seven years later. The Inspectorate's tendency to invariably side with the Commissioner in such cases often led to considerable discontent amongst the staff.

Tidesurveyors were also not immune from allegations of ill-will and despotic behaviour in their treatment of subordinate staff. Swatow Examiner, S. J. Sadkowsky, for example, wrote to Maze in 1934 complaining about his lack of promotion despite years of faithful service, and placing the blame for his slow progress squarely with the confidential reports procedure. 'The result of the system of confidential reports, with

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[42] This rule was officially inaugurated in 1869 at the same time as the confidential reports system was instituted. See *Documents Illustrative,* vol. I, circular no. 25 of 1869, p. 169.

[43] CSA, 679(9) 2339, 'Case of Mr. H. J. de Garcia, 1938', confidential letter, Commissioner Cloarec, Mengtsz, to IG Maze, 16 February 1938 and confidential letter, IG Maze to Mengtsz Commissioner Cloarec, 12 April 1938.

[44] CSA, 679(9) 2339, 'Case of Mr. H. J. de Garcia, 1938', letter, Garcia to IG Maze, 7 July 1938. Garcia appended various documents from his time in the Mengtsz office, aimed at proving he was capable of performing his duties well. The documents included import applications completed by Garcia intended to refute claims that he incompetently handled a tariff classification case and an example of a trade report written by Garcia. Rather than helping his case, Garcia was reprimanded for taking these documents without permission from the Mengtsz office.

no explanation possible, was very disastrous for my career', Sadkowsky wrote, claiming that his troubles began when he was transferred to Harbin during the First World War and his Tidesurveyor took a dislike to him because of his intention to join the army. When Sadkowsky requested a transfer he discovered that the very same grudge-bearing Tidesurveyor had unfortunately been transferred with him, and on the occasion of a further transfer his chief 'sent ahead private letters about my character and ability to my superior officers'.[45] As was typical, Maze dismissed Sadkowsky's claims of unfair treatment, yet this incident highlights the flaws of the confidential report system, which was liable to engender bitter resentment amongst employees who found it did them a disservice.[46]

Moreover, Commissioners did not always cut such infallible figures and were by no means able to exercise their authority unchecked. Unlike the DO of colonial services the Commissioner was required to submit all but the most routine decisions for approval by the IG. In their role as head of the Customs establishment in each port, some felt the burden of understaffing, unmanageable amounts of trade to administer and difficult political situations acutely. Indeed, the autocratic role which he was obliged to play in a port, placing him in direct control of even the most trivial procedures, frequently obstructed his ability to perform his more demanding duties. In 1934, for example, Commissioner Bos in Tianjin was forced to admit defeat and appeal for fewer responsibilities and more staff after only eight months in the post after admitting he was finding it impossible to perform his duties, despite the fact that he was 'neither an unwilling nor a slow worker':

> My time in the office is taken up almost entirely with routine work which, with the IG's authority, could be done with advantage by someone else on my staff. I have no time to get acquainted with, and take a personal interest in, the work, progress and aptitudes of my individual subordinates in the office, to keep in contact at least with the senior officers of the Out-door Staff, to visit Examiners' offices, wharves and out-

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[45] CSA, 679(1) 32371, 'Swatow semi-official, 1933-34', letter from S. J. Sadkowsky enclosed in Swatow semi-official no. 626, 10 March 1934.

[46] Conversely, senior Customs staff also used their power to intervene on behalf of men who they believed had been unfairly passed over for promotion. These types of reports frequently appeared in semi-official and confidential correspondence between port Commissioners and the IG. Four months after his posting to Tianjin in November 1930, for example, Commissioner de Luca recommended three foreign employees for promotion; Examiners A, W. H. Tappenden and H. Ward, and First Class Tidewaiter O. E. Segerholm. These employees had previously received adverse reports and had therefore been placed on the 'supernumerary list' following the 1930 Outdoor Staff reorganisation, but de Luca reported that all three were working to full satisfaction. See CSA, 679(1) 31969, 'Tientsin semi-official, 1931,' semi-official no. 849, Commissioner de Luca to IG Maze, 25 March 1931.

> stations from time to time, and, in general, to assure myself that the machinery of verification and prevention is functioning satisfactorily.[47]

Overwhelmed by the variety of tasks he was expected to perform, Bos was apparently unable to demonstrate the flair, flexibility and resourcefulness required of him.[48] Other senior Customs staff found themselves unsuited to their positions of authority for more personal reasons. An unusual example is Amoy Commissioner Forbes's concerned report on his deputy, Cousturier, in 1934:

> He suffers from a kind of nervous affliction that takes the form of dread of the water; each time he has to cross the harbour he experiences a nervous reaction from which it takes time to recover: if there is any wind he refuses to face the ordeal and stays at home... It is not possible to ask Cousturier to do any such inspection work—the mere idea brings on an attack of nerves, he becomes seasick without justification, and his health suffers.[49]

Coustrier's phobia of the sea was an unfortunate affliction given the nature of his work, although it did not in the long term hinder his Customs career, which he persevered with until 1943. Some foreign employees evidently reached the higher ranks of the Service before their acute unsuitability for Customs work came to light.

Neither was the Commissioner able to maintain strict control over *all* the employees in his charge. Marine Department and River Inspectorate staff, for example, spent most of their working hours at sea or on river voyages, far removed from the Commissioner's watchful eye. For Jack Blackburn, a former Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Navy who served as a Second Officer in the Customs 1934-7, independence and a lack of strict discipline were the main attractions of Customs work. On his transfer to the Hankou River Inspectorate in 1935 he wrote home; 'I am extremely happy to have got on the river and feel sure that I shall like the work; one is more on one's own up here and have more responsibility, which I like'.[50] Later that year, whilst surveying on the Yangzi with a Chinese crew, he reflected that 'I often think that the life which I have longed to live has come, able to dress as I like, and do as I like within reason etc'.[51] Employees such as Blackburn, then, operated largely outside of the Commissioner's autocratic control of the ports.

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[47] CSA, 679(1) 31971, 'Tientsin semi-official, 1934', semi-official no. 903, Commissioner Bos to officiating IG Lawford, 8 June 1934.
[48] Kirk-Greene argues that versatility was a key attribute required in overseas administrators, who needed to accomplish 'a tutti-frutti of assignments' with little or no training. *Imperial Administrators*, p. 279.
[49] CSA, 679(1) 31684, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1934', confidential letter, Commissioner Forbes, Amoy, to officiating IG Lawford, 20 July 1934.
[50] SOAS, MS 380628, 'Jack F. Blackburn letters, 1927-41', letter from Blackburn to his mother, 12 January 1935.
[51] SOAS, MS 380628, 'Jack F. Blackburn letters, 1927-41', letter from Blackburn to his mother, 30 June 1935.

Occasionally, subordinate employees were able to threaten the Commissioner's hegemony over the Customs establishment, and sometimes even supplant it. In some cases senior Assistants were even suspected of exploiting political or military unrest to enhance their own positions and undermine that of their Commissioner. In 1916, for example, the Mengzi Commissioner reported his suspicions about Assistant A. J. Commijs's disloyal conduct during the recent Yunnan rebellion, describing how 'he lacked in tact and discretion and I found out that he was not so loyal to his chief as was expected of him—to say the least'.[52] In 1927, Swatow Commissioner J. Klubien's accusations against his subordinate staff went one step further when he penned a damning confidential report about his deputy A. J. Basto. Klubien claimed that during a period of crisis involving the formation of a Chinese staff union opposed to the Commissioner in Swatow Basto 'deliberately misinformed' Klubien, refused to follow his orders and 'fanned the fire instead of putting it out' in an attempt to ingratiate himself with the dissenting staff. More incriminating were Basto's alleged efforts to urge Klubien to leave the port with the intent of usurping his position in his absence.[53] Whether these reports had credence or were merely symptomatic of the Commissioner's paranoia born out of trying conditions it is difficult to say. But they are nonetheless illustrative of the fact that the Commissioner's authority was by no means unshakable and that many were not entirely self-assured about their ability to maintain control over their custom house.

Furthermore, in spite of the strictly regularised and hierarchical structure of command and communication between the Inspectorate and the ports, regional peculiarities abounded in the custom houses. In *The Commissioner's Dilemma,* a novel written by Paul and Veronica King, the Customs is described as 'that chaotic and Gilbertian Service' where 'anything was possible'.[54] These idiosyncrasies were often the product of staff eccentricities or incompetencies. On his transferral to Fuzhou in 1937, for example, Commissioner Lowder was astounded at the chaos which reigned in the main office:

> This is an *extraordinary office.* Many responsibilities are quite undefined, and there is little or no co-operating anywhere. It is not so much a Custom House as a collection

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[52] CSA, 679(9) 1795, 'Confidential reports of employees withdrawn from service, 1931, A-F', confidential report on A. J. Commijs, 1916.
[53] CSA, 679(9) 1795, 'Confidential reports of employees withdrawn from service in 1931', confidential letter, Commissioner Klubien, Swatow, to Staff Secretary Lebas, 10 February 1928.
[54] Paul and Veronica King, *The Commissioner's Dilemma* (London, 1932), p. 199.

> of odd desks, and more or less the whole of my day is taken up deciding the most trivial things, and in drafting memos and notes on the most absurd subjects.[55]

The root of the problem, according to Lowder, was the incompetence of Deputy Commissioner Lay who, undetected by the IG, had allowed office standards to decline. Although the Inspectorate aimed to mould a strictly hierarchical organisation with a uniform practice in which all ports followed the IG's circulars to the letter, Customs work often assumed regional peculiarities that were some distance from the model of an efficient custom house envisaged by the Inspectorate.

Of course, the smooth-running of the custom house depended as much on local political, economic and social conditions as on the compatibility of employees with their posts. In order to demonstrate this I have chosen four ports which experienced different and changing geographical, commercial and political circumstances for special focus; Shanghai, Swatow (Shantou), Yichang (Ichang) and Harbin. A brief outline of the diverse contexts in which individual custom houses worked brings to light the regional challenges they faced and the flexibility of the Customs in developing local solutions to local problems.

Firstly, Shanghai was one of the original five treaty ports and swiftly developed into China's commercial epicentre. The city was also, in the words of Albert Feuerwerker, 'the node of the foreign occupation of China'.[56] The Western influences on Shanghai's growth and the distinct characteristics of Chinese society in Shanghai have prompted Marie-Claire Bergère to label Shanghai 'the other China', a city which was; 'The China of the minority; marginal China, but just as authentic as the rural China'.[57] Shanghai's burgeoning commerce, political significance and cultural influence meant that the Shanghai custom house represented the zenith of Customs authority in China. However, the size and importance of the Shanghai Customs also made it a visible target of anti-imperialist protest in the 1920s. Although the Customs establishment in many ports was challenged by anti-foreign boycotts and strikes during the 1920s, Shanghai's position as the city with the largest and most

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[55] CSA, 679(1) 14236, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1937; from C.I.- Kiukiang', confidential letter, Commissioner Lowder, Foochow, to Staff Secretary Hu, 15 May 1937.

[56] Feuerwerker, *Foreign Establishment*, p. 8.

[57] Bergère, '"The Other China"', p. 34. Bergère argues that Shanghai's 'international' status created a dynamism which allowed Shanghai to flourish commercially and culturally. There were undoubtedly foreign influences on Shanghai's development, yet 'Shanghai very obviously was Chinese' (p. 13). Wen-hsin Yeh has further emphasised the *global* forces in Shanghai's development: Yeh, 'Shanghai Modernity', pp. 375-94.

institutionalised foreign presence meant that it bore the brunt of anti-foreign demonstrations, most notoriously as the site of the May Thirtieth protests in 1925.[58]

Furthermore, the rise to power of the Nationalists in 1927 caused unprecedented difficulties for the Shanghai Customs, most notably in the orchestration of a boycott of British and Japanese goods by the Shanghai Guomindang in June 1927.[59] Although relations between the Customs and the Nationalist government improved after Maze's appointment to the Inspector Generalship in 1929 and his subsequent conciliatory gestures towards Chinese authority, the Customs was now operating on a different footing and this was especially felt in Shanghai. Reviled for its foreignness yet also valued as an arena of modernity, Shanghai 'became a pole, even a vital nerve center, for the new regime, which strove to establish its grip over the city', a policy which extended to foreign-controlled institutions such as the Customs.[60] Guomindang-sponsored efforts to limit foreign domination of the Customs and bolster Chinese influence emerged in the shape of a Shanghai Customs Association for Chinese staff in 1929—which thrived despite the fact that the Inspectorate had previously stamped out staff associations and unions at the first sign of their emergence. In this case the Shanghai Commissioner resignedly explained that because of the Association's endorsement by the Nationalist government and Superintendents 'it does not come within the Commissioner's competence to disestablish it', a sign of the restraining influence of the new government on foreign authority in the Customs.[61] After Shanghai's capture by Japanese forces in 1937 the Customs found itself in an increasingly untenable situation—one which was exacerbated by the dismissal of approximately one hundred British and American Service employees from Shanghai in mid-December 1941. Although it valiantly persevered, in the face

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[58] See Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire,* for an account of the effects of growing anti-foreignism in Shanghai in the 1920s, especially Chapter Six, 'China's Bastille: May Thirtieth and its Background', pp. 97-112. See also Perry, *Shanghai on Strike*, for a detailed analysis of the mobilisation and affiliations of Chinese labour in Shanghai.

[59] See Harumi Goto-Shibata, *Japan and Britain in Shanghai, 1925-31* (London, 1995), Chapter 4, 'The Northern Expedition and Shanghai', and Chapter Five, 'Role Reversal', pp. 42-92, for a detailed account of the anti-British and anti-Japanese boycotts in Shanghai.

[60] Christian Henriot, *Shanghai 1927-37: Municipality, Locality, and Modernization* (Berkeley CA, 1993), p. 1.

[61] CSA, 679(1) 17616, Handing-over-charge memoranda, Shanghai, 1901-48', handing-over-charge memo., Commissioner Maze to Commissioner Myers, 1 October 1929.

of wartime smuggling and profiteering it was almost impossible for the Customs establishment to effectively perform its duties.[62]

Secondly, the southern seaport of Swatow in Guangdong province became a treaty port in 1861, in agreement with the Sino-French Convention of 1860, and quickly emerged as a thriving trading centre in south China, a position which it maintained well into the twentieth century. Swatow was regarded as an amenable posting in Customs circles, with plenty of work and a moderately sized foreign community. Of course, the Swatow Customs establishment *did* experience periodic interruptions to its smooth-running. Its southern location, far from the watchful eye of Peking, meant that it was a prime location for regional military and political coups before 1927.[63] Furthermore, the Swatow custom house experienced more than its fair share of conflicts with merchant groups, local communities and, during the 1920s, from labour unions. The Customs was, for example, embroiled in an ongoing property dispute with local inhabitants and officials. In 1909 the Commissioner recalled 'several official and popular attempts made of late years to dispossess the Swatow Customs of portions of its land' and described how the 'policy of Commissioners in this port is to hold onto what we have got and the utmost vigilance is required to detect and stop any encroachment or establishment of fancied rights'.[64] The effects of the 1925 anti-British boycott were also keenly felt in Swatow; the Commissioner reported afterwards that 'the situation was one of great confusion and the political machinery of the local government seemed to have been devised for the express purpose of inviting incidents and inculcating severe lessons of patience and self-restraint'.[65] Local opposition to the Swatow Customs, although ever-present, was inevitably exacerbated by the Nationalist rise to power. In 1933 the Commissioner

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[62] For an evocation of profiteering, collaboration with the Japanese authorities and the operation of foreign intelligence services in wartime Shanghai see Bernard Wasserstein, *Secret War in Shanghai: Treachery, Subversion and Collaboration in the Second World War* (London, 1998). For an idea of the difficult conditions in which the Shanghai Customs establishment was working in the war years see Frederick Wakeman, *The Shanghai Badlands: Wartime terrorism and urban crime, 1937-41* (Cambridge, 1996).

[63] See, for example, CSA, 679(1) 17630, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Swatow, 1900-26', Swatow dispatch no. 5,223, handing-over-charge memo, acting Deputy Commissioner Tisdall to Commissioner Moorhead, 1918. Tisdall reported that the 'Cantonese party' were in power in Swatow in 'open rebellion to the Peking Government'.

[64] CSA, 679(1) 17630, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Swatow, 1900-26', Swatow dispatch no. 4,021, acting Deputy Commissioner Currie to Commissioner Gilchrist, 17 May 1909.

[65] CSA, 679(1) 17630, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Swatow, 1900-26', dispatch no. 6,268, handing-over-charge memo, Commissioner Hedgeland to Commissioner Klubien, 23 November 1926.

commented on the large volume of complaints made against the Customs during his stint in Swatow, warning that:

> You will certainly find yourself burdened here with a colossal and ever-increasing number of complaints made direct to the Inspectorate or to Nanking against the action of your Staff, whether it be valuation, searching of passengers' luggage, non-return of a deposit, method of sale of a Customs property.[66]

Although work in the Swatow Customs was in many respects an agreeable posting, it also meant dealing with consistent efforts to disrupt Customs procedures and undermine its authority from local communities.

Thirdly, Yichang, situated on the Yangzi, was a small river port opened to foreign trade in 1877 by the Chefoo (Yantai) Convention (1876), and was the most important commercial conduit into inland China until the stretch of the Yangzi between Yichang and Chongqing became navigable by large steamships in the 1890s. A small town which offered little in the way of entertainment or foreign society, Yichang was never a particularly desirable posting.[67] Furthermore, by the 1920s Yichang was a port in decline, its trading importance having been eclipsed by Chongqing. In 1930, the Yichang Commissioner wrote to Maze pointing out that Yichang employed an absurdly large staff for such a commercially unimportant port. 'This port is living on its past glories', he declared, advising that the number of Assistants and Examiners be reduced to two as 'nowadays there is no justification whatsoever for such a large and expensive personnel'.[68] Twentieth-century Yichang was an example of a custom house which performed only minimal and routine work, although it did retain strategic importance as a base for the River Inspectorate. However, in the 1930s the circumstances of the Yichang Customs' working world changed dramatically. From 1930 the Yichang Customs was involved in an ongoing struggle with Chinese military authorities, who insisted on housing troops in

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[66] CSA, 679(1) 17631, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Swatow,' dispatch no. 7,146, handing-over-charge memo, Commissioner Fletcher to Commissioner Hilliard, 15 April 1933.

[67] In 1929, for example, one Indoor employee stationed at Yichang observed that over seventy-five per cent of the Yichang staff had applied for transfers during the past two years. See CSA, 679(1) 31639, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1929', enclosure in confidential letter, Commissioner Myers, Shanghai, to IG Maze, 15 October 1929. River Inspectorate employee Jack F. Blackburn described Yichang as 'not much of a place' and much preferred being alone on the river to living at his posting; SOAS, MS 380628, 'Jack F. Blackburn letters, 1927-41', letter from Blackburn to his mother, 28 April 1935.

[68] CSA, 679(1) 32082, 'Ichang semi-official, 1930-31', semi-official letter no. 596, Commissioner Dawson Grove, Ichang, to IG Maze, 22 February 1930.

Customs-owned buildings.[69] This in itself was disruptive to Customs work, yet the situation worsened significantly after Yichang became a target of Japanese bombing raids from 1938 due to the town's strategic importance as a gateway for shipping to the wartime capital of Chongqing. In March 1939 the Commissioner reported that Yichang had suffered thirty bombing raids since January 1938, the latest of which had targeted a heavily populated part of the city razing 1,000 buildings and causing inestimable loss of life.[70] During the war years the Customs staff were always on guard and ready to evacuate at a moment's notice. In this era, working in Yichang had been transformed from a somewhat mundane and lacklustre job to one which was characterised by danger and disruption.

Fourthly, Harbin, sited on the Sungari River, occupied a unique position in China. The city developed as a result of its importance as a base for the Russian-owned China Eastern Railway's project to connect the Trans-Siberian railway to Vladivostok, and the Customs administration began to put down roots there after Harbin became a treaty port in 1907. Never wholly Russian or Chinese, Harbin was administered first by Russian authorities, then by Chinese and finally by Japanese authorities, a situation which gave rise to bitter struggles over the city's national identity.[71] The Harbin Customs establishment was considered a problematic and special case. For a start, the disputed ownership of the city meant that the Chinese Customs was forced to work alongside the Russian customs establishment until China consolidated her control of the city in 1917.[72] The difficult position of the Harbin Customs was exacerbated by the elimination of Russian control of the city in 1917;

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[69] CSA, 679(1) 32083, 'Ichang semi-officials, 1932-33', semi-official letter, Commissioner Kurematsu, Yichang, to IG Maze, 28 May 1932. Kurematsu reported that the Customs club and the Assistants' mess had been occupied since 1930 by military authorities who refused to pay rent.

[70] CSA, 679(1) 32088, 'Ichang semi-official, 1939', semi-official letter, Yichang Commissioner to IG Maze, 28 March 1939.

[71] The China Eastern Railway first established civilian administration in the form of a municipal council and police force in Harbin in 1900-08. The Chinese zone of the city, however, which was outside of the CER zone, was administered by the Chinese authorities. In 1917 control of Harbin proper was seized by the Chinese authorities and an aggressive policy of promoting Harbin's Chinese identity and eclipsing its Russian identity was instituted by Nationalists in the 1920s. For a history of nationalism in Harbin see James H. Carter, *Creating a Chinese Harbin: Nationalism in an International City, 1916-1932* (Ithaca NY, 2002). After 1932 Harbin became part of the Manzhouguo customs establishment and thus broke away from the Foreign Inspectorate. For an account of Harbin under Japanese rule see Søren Clausen and Stig Thøgersen (eds.), *The Making of a Chinese City: History and Historiography in Harbin* (London, 1995), Chapter Three, 'The Japanese Occupation: 1932-1945', pp. 109-23.

[72] See CSA, 679(1) 17583, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Harbin', handing-over-charge memo, Commissioner Konovaloff to Commissioner Watson, 30 November 1910 for a history of the early workings of the Customs in Harbin.

because the CCS was a Chinese organisation relations between the Customs and the China Eastern Railway deteriorated, which inevitably resulted in a fractious relationship with Harbin's Russian authorities.[73] Moreover, the factionalised character of the city meant that it was prudent for the Harbin staff to follow the Customs dictum of neutral service to its fullest extent. In 1924, the Commissioner warned his successor that, 'Harbin is a hot-bed of political intrigues at all times, the Railway being the storm centre. I strongly advise you not to take sides, to keep out of it and maintain a strictly neutral attitude. By doing so you will retain the confidence of all parties'.[74] In order to negotiate Harbin's political terrain the Customs staff needed to be much more restrained and mindful of the consequences of their behaviour than employees in other ports.[75]

Harbin's frontier status also meant that the Customs could become entangled in hostilities between Russian and Chinese forces, and between White and Soviet Russians, especially considering that the Harbin custom house also controlled the Customs establishments in isolated outports along the China-Russia border, such as Sansing, Suifenho, Lahasusu and Manchouli. During a Sino-Soviet border clash in 1929 staff at the outports within the Harbin sphere of control found themselves in imminent danger of being caught in the crossfire. Russian members of staff in particular were fearful of the threat posed to them by invading Soviet troops, and attempts were made to evacuate all Russian employees away from the centre of hostilities. As the Harbin Commissioner observed, 'if the Soviets commence to advance into North Manchuria, as seems to be the common belief even in responsible and Consular circles, there will be a dreadful stampede of Russians and, undoubtedly, a carnage of those who are left behind'.[76] In the end, all Customs staff escaped unscathed, although the Suifenho custom house was destroyed in a bombing raid, yet

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[73] CSA, 679(1) 17583, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Harbin', Harbin dispatch no. 2,010, handing-over charge memo, Commissioner Grevedon to Commissioner d'Anjou, 21 October 1919. Grevedon reported that: 'Belonging to a Chinese administration at a time when China's interests were distinctly opposed to those of Russia I have found it very difficult to maintain the cordial relations with the Chinese Eastern Railway'. One major source of conflict between the Customs and the Russian authorities, Grevedon explained, was the Customs' usurpation of passport control duties from the Russian military.

[74] CSA, 679(1) 17583, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Harbin', Harbin dispatch no. 3,023 of 1924, handing-over-charge memo, Commissioner d'Anjou to Commissioner Marconi, 1 May 1924.

[75] They also needed to demonstrate special abilities in other respects. For example, an ability to speak either Russian, French or Japanese was a highly desirable quality in those posted to Harbin.

[76] CSA, 679(1) 31893, 'Harbin semi-official, 1929', semi-official no. 827, acting Commissioner Barentzen, Harbin, to IG Maze, 22 October 1929.

this episode serves to illustrate how working in the Harbin Customs was often trying and sometimes dangerous.

Local circumstances, then, significantly affected the nature and content of Customs work and also shaped the experience of working for the Service. For most ports, however, the most dramatic change to the Customs working environment came with Japanese occupation in the 1930s. In 1932 the Manchurian Customs stations one by one broke away from the Inspectorate and were incorporated into the Manzhuguo state. The northern ports which remained under the Inspectorate's control were henceforth forced to field determined attempts by the Japanese authorities to seize control of their revenues.[77] In a letter to the Tianjin Commissioner in 1937, Maze underlined the fact that all ports 'are working at full pressure and *all* are under-staffed'. In this difficult time, a sense of duty to the Customs was more important than ever. Maze exhorted that in 'a time like the present all of us must be prepared to do our bit, and neither the In-door nor the Out-door Staff should be surprised if they are called upon to work longer hours than usual'.[78] Wartime conditions were the ultimate test of decades of effort expended in cultivating loyalty amongst staff.

By the postwar period, however, after enduring years of living and working in wartime conditions and after the foreign staff had been pared down to the bare minimum, devotion to the Customs was wearing thin. In 1946, Amoy Commissioner Newman wrote to IG Little explaining why many of the foreign staff had lost heart:

> They have come back to an unhappy China and work is infinitely more difficult and uncongenial than it was before. Foreigners are disappointed at the readiness with which foreign institutions, firms and people are maligned. The rackets well known in Shanghai are practised on a lesser scale at the ports. Some employees are without their wives and are unhappy.[79]

However well developed their sense of obligation to the Customs may have been in the pre-war period, in 1945 the foreign staff were entering a fundamentally-changed working world. In this new environment, when the days of the foreign staff were obviously numbered, many were disillusioned with the what the Customs had to offer them.

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[77] For an account of the takeover see *Documents Illustrative*, vol. V, semi-official circular no. 95, 'Manchurian customs: account of seizure of by "Manchukuo" authorities', 20 April 1933.
[78] CSA, 679(9) 1415, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1937: Shanghai-Wuhu', confidential letter, Staff Secretary Hu to Commissioner Myers, Tianjin, 5 December 1937.
[79] Houghton Library, Harvard University, L. K. Little papers, FMS Am 1999.4, 'L. K. Little, personal, 1946,' personal letter, Commissioner Newman, Amoy, to IG Little, 15 September 1946. Newman also argued that foreigners should be re-employed on contract in an advisory capacity in order to formalise their new role in the Service.

Transfers and promotions

An indelible feature of working life in the CCS was frequent transferral between ports. At times transfers were greeted as a welcome release from the monotony of life in a small port, and on occasion despised for terminating a contented sojourn in an agreeable posting, yet they always had the effect of uprooting the employee in question and forcing him to acclimatise to the specific working conditions of different ports at regular intervals during his career. Employees were transferred approximately every two years—although the time served in each port was not fixed and those occupying specialised positions were usually tied to particular ports—a policy which was intended to acquaint all employees with the full breadth of Customs work.[80] According to the Inspectorate, this system of frequent transfers was integral to the success of the Service. A 1936 handbook for Customs staff asserted that, 'the constant fusion of new blood into a port assures the maintenance of a proper standard of work and uniformity', and that 'even were employees willing to remain permanently in one port, familiarity with the work and loss of touch with the outside world would tend to lead to general slackness and inefficiency'.[81] It was also considered a fair policy, ensuring that no one remained trapped in a small, dreary backwater for too long whilst their colleagues enjoyed the amenities of the larger treaty ports.[82] Colonial careers often went hand-in-hand with a somewhat itinerant lifestyle, partly because the periodic home leaves issued to European employees necessitated constant staff reshuffles and replacements.[83] Although assigned to a province for the duration of their careers, ICS officers were moved frequently between districts, sometimes as much as once a year.[84] Transfers between districts for British personnel in the various African colonial administrative services were more ad hoc, yet most could expect to be placed in a different posting at least every few years

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[80] Various low-ranking employees were also not transferable, such as Watchers, T'ingch'ai, Watchmen, Coolies, Messengers and Launch Crews.

[81] CSA, 679(1) 21540, *Chinese Maritime Customs: Staff organization and control* (Shanghai: Statistical Department, 1936), p. 10.

[82] By way of contrast, Chinese staff were rarely transferred because they usually had greater family commitments in the town or province in which they were originally stationed. Their knowledge of regional dialects was also useful to the Service and an obstruction to transferring Chinese staff away from their home province.

[83] The Hong Kong Cadets were something of an anomaly in this respect; only six were transferred to other colonies in the period 1912-41. See Norman Miners, *Hong Kong Under Imperial Rule, 1912-41* (Oxford, 1987), p. 88.

[84] See Potter, *India's Political Administrators*, pp. 27-9.

and cadets on their first tour could be moved as frequently as every six months.[85] After the various and separate African and Far Eastern colonial civil services were amalgamated into a single Colonial Administrative Service in 1932 mobility between colonies was also possible.[86] Turning to China itself, foreign-run trading and banking firms—such as Jardine Matheson & Co. and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, to cite two well-known examples—also followed a system of periodic transfers.[87]

Although Customs transfer policy was by no means anomalous amongst overseas services, petitions aimed at resisting or requesting transfers abounded throughout the Foreign Inspectorate's history. By far the most frequently sounded justification was bad health, which was usually blamed on China's 'intemperate' climate, especially in the nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century dispatches were peppered with requests to be moved either away from the debilitating southern climate to a temperate northern port, or away from the unbearable cold of the north towards the wholesome warmth of the south. Examiner Smith, stationed in Swatow, begged to be transferred north in 1888 because 'the long summers here are so unfavourable to my constitution that nearly half the winter is passed before I have recovered from the effects of the last summer'.[88] Berthing Officer Olsen stationed in Woosung near Shanghai in 1883 reported similar problems with the southern climate, claiming that he and his entire family suffered from recurrent bouts of fever and had 'become saturated with malarial poison' due to the location of his posting.[89] Petitions for transfers due to health reasons were slightly less frequent in the twentieth-century—a result of better medical provisions for employees and the instalment of modern sanitation systems at most ports—yet they remained the most common reason

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[85] Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of Authority*, pp. 96-8.

[86] See Anthony Kirk-Greene, *On Crown Service: A History of HM Colonial and Overseas Civil Services, 1837-1997* (London, 1999), p. 33. The first Colonial Service branch to be unified was the Colonial Administrative Service in 1932, which merged the Tropical African Administrative Services with the Eastern Cadets. Until 1912 there were around twelve different colonial civil services responsible to a variety of authorities, including the Colonial Office, the Foreign Office, the India Office, the Dominions Office and Crown Agents for the Colonies (pp. 12-14). Even after the amalgamation of the different colonial services in 1930 the ICS and the SPS remained autonomous.

[87] For a history of Jardine Matheson & Co., commissioned by the company, see Robert Blake, *Jardine Matheson: Traders of the East* (London, 1999). On the HSBC see Frank H. H. King's classic history, *The History of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1987-91).

[88] CSA, 679(2) 1829, 'Swatow Customs: Dispatches from IG', Examiner J. D. Smith to IG Hart, 1 April 1888.

[89] CSA, 679(2) 1583, 'Shanghai Customs: Dispatches to IG, 1883', Shanghai dispatch no. 282, 1 October 1883. Requests for transfers on health reasons such as these proliferated in the nineteenth century. Another case was that of Examiner Godwin in Shanghai who asked to be moved further south in 1884 because the winter cold was causing pain in his amputated limb. CSA, 679(2) 1584, 'Shanghai Customs: Dispatches to IG, 1884', Shanghai dispatch no. 8, 5 January 1884.

for transfer requests, especially amongst older members of the Service. In 1933, for example, a heated exchange of letters took place between Commissioner Howell and IG Maze, after the former received news that he was to be transferred from Tianjin in the north to Fuzhou in the south. Howell admitted that he had spent over twelve years in northern ports but protested that a move south would provoke a recurrence of 'sprue', an illness which he had suffered from ten years previously and from which he had never fully recovered. Maze was incensed at Howell's audacity, reminding him:

> You have received unusual preferment throughout your career in the Service—especially in respect of the favourable localities, mostly north of Shanghai, in which you have invariably been stationed, while others have been bearing the heat and burden of the day down south—and I fail utterly to conceive how your appointment to an agreeable and important port like Foochow can in any way be connected with a want of consideration.[90]

Evidently, the IG's word was final in such cases, and no amount of pleading could persuade him to make changes to transfer arrangements that were unbeneficial to the Service. Furthermore, turning down a transfer for no good reason displayed a lack of commitment to Customs interests.

During the 1930s when the Nationalist government was placing greater strictures on the Inspectorate's power, transfer decisions took on a more political hue. The Customs needed to carefully consider which foreign employees to transfer to important posts, and was sometimes required to seek the Guomindang's approval. In 1931, for example, Stephenson, who had previously occupied the position of NRS, wrote a vitriolic letter to Maze expressing his astonishment and disappointment at finding on his arrival in Hong Kong that he would not be appointed to the Shanghai Commissionership, which had apparently been promised to him by Maze. Stephenson's transfer to Shanghai had apparently been contested by the Nationalist authorities, yet the force of his anger was directed at Maze:

> It is inconceivable to me why you should have continued to consider the possibility of my appointment to Shanghai when you knew that my appointment to the post was not

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[90] CSA, 679(1) 31640, 'IG confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, Jan-Aug 1930', confidential letters between Commissioner Howell, Tianjin, and IG Maze, 15 February-17 April 1930. At the same time Maze was corresponding with Commissioner Hedgeland about his lack of enthusiasm for a transfer to Hankou because he feared that the heat there would be detrimental to his health. In retaliation for Hedgeland's impudence, Maze proposed transferring him to the hotter and damper port of Mengtsz as an alternative, causing Hedgeland to swiftly change his mind about Hankou's charms. See CSA, 679(1) 31640, 'IG confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, Jan-Aug 1930', confidential letter, I.G. Maze to Commissioner Hedgeland, Hankow, 27 February 1930. The following year Commissioner Braud in Canton asked to withdraw his resignation on the condition that he be transferred to a northern port, because 'my health will not allow me to put in a fourth summer in Canton': CSA, 679(1) 31642, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1931', confidential letter, Commissioner Braud, Canton, to IG Maze, 16 October 1931.

> acceptable to the Chinese Authorities. It is inconceivable to me how you could think for a moment that I should wish, or, indeed, be willing to accept a post for which the Chinese Authorities did not consider me suitable.[91]

As 'perhaps the *senior British* Commissioner in the Service' Stephenson believed he deserved better treatment, yet Maze was unrelenting.[92] Transfers of senior foreign employees were evidently becoming more heavily politicised in the 1930s and the Inspectorate no longer possessed full autonomy over its staffing decisions.

Promotions policy was another contentious issue for the Customs. Until the late-nineteenth century, however, complaints about unfair promotions were rare as staff were usually promoted rapidly because of staff shortages in the higher ranks. Standard practice was to promote employees on seniority as vacancies arose until they reached the senior ranks (First Assistant or Chief Assistant in the case of the Indoor Staff, and the Examiner ranks in the Outdoor Staff), after which appointments would be made on a selective basis, although men would be passed over if they proved incompetent or failed to make sufficient progress in their Chinese studies.[93] In terms of the frequency with which routine promotions could be expected—approximately every two years[94] —Customs men certainly fared better than the employees of other administrative services in China, notably the consular service. In the twentieth century the 'promotion blockage' was a serious source of discontent amongst British consular employees whose prospects were obstructed by an excess of juniors recruited at the turn of the century, which created an imbalance in the staff structure and a high retirement age amongst senior officers.[95]

There were, however, always more lucrative career opportunities in China competing for the attention of Customs men, especially for the low paid Outdoor Staff. A 1916 report forwarded by the Shanghai Commissioner comparing Outdoor salaries and prospects with those of occupations of a similar status available to foreigners revealed that the incentives to pursue a career in the Service were amongst the lowest

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[91] CSA, 679(1) 31641, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1931', semi-official 'special' letter, Commissioner Stephenson to IG Maze, 31 March 1931. Stephenson was especially angry about the way in which he had been removed from his post at the London Office and forced to travel to China towards the end of his career to make way for former Tianjin Commissioner Hayley-Bell, who needed to be transferred out of China after the Lenox Simpson *debacle* in 1930.

[92] CSA, 679(1) 31641, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1931', confidential letter, IG Maze to Commissioner Stephenson, 6 April 1931.

[93] See *Origin and Organisation of the Chinese Customs Service*, p. 27, for an outline of this promotion policy for the Indoor Staff *circa* 1922.

[94] Men who showed exceptional promise could be promoted more rapidly. In 1869 Hart ruled that every fifth promotion would be made personally by the IG based on merit rather than on seniority. *Documents Illustrative,* vol. I, circular no. 25 of 1869, p. 159.

[95] See Coates, *China Consuls,* pp. 433-8.

in Shanghai. Whereas after twelve years of employment in the Customs an average Outdoor man would have reached the position of Assistant Examiner A on a monthly salary of $221 (with a rent allowance of $61), an employee in the public works department of the Shanghai Municipal Council could expect to become a clerk of works on a salary of $341-480 (with $50 rent allowance) within the same time period.[96] Compared with recruits to the Shanghai Municipal Police, however, Outdoor men were slightly better off—in the early 1920s policemen waited seventeen years on average before reaching the rank of Inspector.[97] Although it did not offer the very best prospects, relative to many other career opportunities in China the Customs offered a highly organised system of promotion with the opportunity to regularly progress.

Inevitably, however, complaints about promotions being unjustifiably withheld were often forwarded, belying the apparent even-handedness of the advancement system. Paul King (in the Indoor Staff 1874-1921) was the most outspoken critic, and devoted much of his memoir to complaining about his promotion tribulations. The 'snake in the grass', according to King, was Hart's tendency to bear grudges.[98] Hart apparently took a dislike to King from the beginning, stalling his advancement to the post of Commissioner—which he achieved only after twenty-four years in the Service—and even causing him to be demoted at one point.[99] Sounding the case for the Outdoor Staff, L. C. Arlington (in the Outdoor Staff 1885-1905) declared that 'the system of promotion was literally rotten' resulting in

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[96] CSA, 679(1) 16826, 'Commissioners' reports on Outdoor Staff petitions for increase in pay in reply to circular no. 2,545', enclosure in Shanghai semi-official no. 122, Commissioner Unwin, Shanghai, to IG Aglen, 23 October 1916. The report also compared Outdoor Staff prospects unfavourably to those in shipping and commercial firms, yet dismissed these comparisons as unworthy of consideration because lengthy apprenticeships were required in order to obtain work as a deck officer and mercantile firms only employed shop assistants on ten year contracts.

[97] See Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, p. 194.

[98] King, *In the Chinese Customs Service*, p. 46.

[99] King, *In the Chinese Customs Service*, pp. 45-62. When he was transferred to Jiujiang in 1883 King found himself occupying a lower rank to the one he had occupied when stationed in the same port six years previously. In the midst of the Boxer Rising in 1900, during which time contact between Hart and his Commissioners was cut, King, recently appointed to his first Commissionership at Canton, attempted to advance his position in the Customs by going over Hart's head. Li Hongzhang transgressed normal Customs procedure by appointing King 'Superintendent Commissioner of Customs' for all Guangdong and Guangxi ports, and rumours circulated that Li intended to appoint King to the IG-ship. King overstepped the mark, and was relegated to small and dreary ports for the rest of Hart's time as IG. See Richard Horowitz, 'The Ambiguities of an Imperial Institution: Crisis and Transition in the Chinese Maritime Customs, 1899-1911', unpublished paper presented at the Association for Asian Studies annual meeting, San Francisco, 6-9 April 2006.

'seething dissatisfaction' amongst the staff.[100] Customs work could seem thankless for men who had dedicated their careers to dutiful service and had reaped belated rewards. Others failed to advance for less capricious reasons than grudge-bearing, realising too late that they did not have what it took to reach the higher ranks. A pitiful case was that of Examiner A, W. H. Tappenden, who pleaded with Maze to be paid off in 1936 after failing to pass the exam required for promotion to the position of Chief Examiner for the fifth time. Tappenden was clearly dispirited by his failure to progress in the Customs. 'With twenty-six years of service behind me I feel my humble position—the futility and hopelessness of it—most acutely indeed', he admitted.[101] Certain employees evidently found, sometimes after a lengthy career, that their aptitude for Customs work was sadly lacking. For these men, promotion to the higher ranks, based as it was on merit, was near impossible.[102]

After 1927, when foreign recruitment ceased and accelerated promotion of Chinese staff was introduced, disgruntlement with the promotions system evolved into anxiety. In 1929, for example, Commissioner Howell in Tianjin wrote to Maze reporting a 'widespread feeling of unrest among junior foreign Assistants, a feeling which is the natural result of events in China during the past two years.' Part of the dissatisfaction stemmed from an aversion to serving under Chinese superiors, but the main cause for concern was 'the absence of any knowledge as to how far promotion will be retarded by the advancement of Chinese over their heads'.[103] Maze replied encouragingly that the positions of foreign employees were 'reasonably protected' and that he had received 'verbal assurances' that the promotion of the foreign staff would not be retarded by the accelerated promotion of Chinese employees.[104] The

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[100] Arlington, *Through the Dragon's Eyes*, p. 123. Arlington blamed this on the confidential reports system which meant that a man who did not get along with their Commissioners was 'liable to be finished, as far as his prospects in the Service were concerned' (p. 122).

[101] CSA, 679(1) 32229, 'Shanghai semi-official correspondence, 1931', semi-official no. 1,322, Commissioner Lawford, Shanghai, to IG Maze, 14 September 1936. Tappenden's confidential reports were usually unsatisfactory, perhaps explaining his inability to progress in the Service. He was eventually paid off in 1939, still in the rank of Examiner A.

[102] A further example is that of two Indoor men who wrote to the IG in 1929 complaining that juniors were consistently promoted over their heads. One of these men, Maltchenko, found himself stuck in the rank of First Assistant A despite thirty years of service. See CSA, 679(1) 31639, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1929', enclosures in confidential letter, Commissioner Myers, Shanghai, to IG Maze, 17 May 1929. Maltchenko remained in the position of First Assistant A until he retired the following year.

[103] CSA, 679(1) 31639, 'Confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1929', confidential letter, Commissioner Howell, Tianjin, to IG Maze, 29 July 1929.

[104] CSA, 679(1) 31639, 'Confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1929', confidential letter, IG Maze to Commissioner Howell, Tianjin, 21 August 1929.

IG's reassurances rang hollow with his staff, however, especially as he could give no concrete guarantee that the services of foreigners would not be dispensed with in the near future.

In reality, at this point the foreign Indoor Staff had little cause to worry that a flood of Chinese appointments to senior positions would erode their promotion prospects. As *table 2.3* shows, by 1936 only five Chinese Commissioners had been appointed, although the number of Chinese Assistants had increased markedly since 1928. Worries amongst the foreign Outdoor Staff were more justifiable. Although only one Chinese Tidesurveyor was working in 1936, the numbers of Chinese Examiners had risen dramatically from zero in 1928 to 294 in 1936 (see *table 2.4*). However, it was in the 1940s that the prospects of the foreign staff irreversibly deteriorated. In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor all allied staff in occupied China were discharged from service and subsequently interned after February 1943. Unhappily for them, most were then formally paid off by the Little administration, meaning that by July 1944 only eighteen allied nationals were active in the Service in unoccupied China.[105] During this decade IG Little was constantly fielding petitions from foreign employees worried that their Customs careers would be inevitably stifled in the face of competition from Chinese staff for senior posts.[106] Given that the Chinese government would make no formal statement addressing the issue of foreign prospects, Little could do nothing to restore confidence amongst his foreign staff. Many long-serving employees still felt a deep sense of commitment to the Customs in the 1940s, yet they also realised that the days of the Foreign Inspectorate were numbered. Although the attractiveness of a Colonial Service career experienced a revival in the 1940s, even as British colonies were making steps towards independence, the Customs had long ceased to be viewed as a viable career by this date.[107] By this point the main preoccupation of the foreign staff was to make a quick exit from the Customs with pension intact whilst it was still possible to do so.

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[105] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.1, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1941-44,' *The Chinese Maritime Customs Service*, 6 July 1944.

[106] In 1946, for example, Little wrote to the Shanghai Commissioner summarising a petition sent to him by the Shanghai foreign staff in which they complained of 'discrimination against their interests and welfare, and a tendency to sidetrack or ignore the foreign staff whenever and wherever possible'. See Little papers, FMS Am 1999.3, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1946', letter from IG Little to Commissioner Pritchard, Shanghai, 2 July 1946.

[107] Despite the fact that in 1948 Ceylon became the first British colony to gain independence, numbers recruited to the Colonial Service continued to increase, rising from 1,143 in 1947 to 1,546 in 1950. See Kirk-Greene, *On Crown Service*, Chapter Three, 'The expansion of the postwar Colonial Service,

Table 2.3- **Comparative table of Chinese and foreign Indoor Staff numbers, 1928-36**

Year	Commissioners		Acting Commissioners		Deputy Commissioners		Acting Deputy Commissioners		Assistants	
	Ch.	*Fo.*	*Ch.*	*Fo.*	*Ch.*	*Fo.*	*Ch.*	*Fo.*	*Ch.*	*Fo.*
1928	-	41	-	15	5	24	5	15	165	162
1929	-	45	6	16	8	22	11	17	182	142
1930	4	37	5	13	2	28	15	19	213	119
1931	3	36	5	16	3	28	17	22	232	111
1932	4	39	4	14	3	25	18	18	244	97
1933	4	39	5	9	2	24	17	16	237	77
1934	4	32	4	7	3	24	18	18	240	71
1935	4	31	5	8	7	22	19	20	235	66
1936	5	33	5	9	6	16	18	22	236	62

Table 2.4- **Comparative table of Chinese and foreign Outdoor and Coast Staff numbers, 1928-36**

Year	Tidesurveyors		Boat Officers		Appraisers		Examiners		Tidewaiters		Coast Staff	
	Ch.	*Fo.*	*Ch.*	*Fo.*	*Ch.*	*Fo.*	*Ch.*	*Fo.*	*Ch.*	*Fo.*	*Ch.*	*Fo.*
1928	-	44	-	37	-	30	-	301	598	201	-	44
1929	-	48	2	34	-	28	11	311	631	169	-	43
1930	1	50	8	62	-	42	30	280	679	105	-	44
1931	1	44	9	64	-	42	31	270	826	94	-	49
1932	1	51	15	61	-	45	61	255	915	77	2	48
1933	1	47	21	61	-	41	97	215	858	31	2	70
1934	1	48	43	53	1	44	120	195	906	26	20	122
1935	1	46	58	48	2	50	180	180	991	25	43	110
1936	1	52	68	39	3	60	294	157	1037	23	61	115

Source: Staff Secretary's Correspondence, 1937 [108]

Nationality and race

An awareness of national distinctions undoubtedly coloured the working world of the Customs. At the very least, foreign employees were always conscious of the various national assemblages within the Service and their different status in the Customs— Britain's predominance was, as we have seen, a particular sore point. Staff were, moreover, alert to their position *within* Customs national groupings. In 1933, for example, acting Deputy Commissioner in Tianjin, Gross-Smith, expressed indignation that his 'position in the list of Americans in the Service, compared with 1929, is now very discouraging. I had then the prospect of being the No.3 American

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1943-54', pp. 39-61, for a description of the expansion of the colonial service and policy reforms in the late 1940s.

[108] These tables are taken from a confidential letter from Staff Secretary Hu to NRS Macoun, 13 November 1937, instructing Macoun to forward the tables to the Foreign Office: CSA, 679(1) 14237, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1937: Kiungchow-Santuao'.

but now I appear to be rather a poor No.8'.[109] Such sensitivity amongst senior staff to their position within their national hierarchy was not uncommon.[110]

In the majority of ports, in the course of the everyday work of the Customs, nationality was not a significant issue under normal circumstances. After foreign powers began to seize territorial leaseholds and spheres of influence in China in the 1890s, however, national representation in certain ports became extremely politicised. In 1899, two years after seizing Jiaozhou Bay, Germany extracted an agreement to staff the Qingdao custom house exclusively with Germans, a privilege which was carried over to Japan in 1915.[111] Russia and Japan followed suit with negotiations for a similar agreement at Port Arthur and Dairen (Dalian), resulting in the 1907 Dairen Customs Agreement.[112] In other ports there were no formal agreements, yet staff of certain nationalities were sometimes considered more useful to specific localities. Harbin is one example, where control of the city by Russian authorities until 1917 made a Russian preponderance in the staff desirable for political and practical reasons. In the 1930s the Kowloon Commissioner, Forbes, persistently claimed that an overwhelmingly British staff was essential to the smooth-running of his port because of its proximity to Hong Kong. In 1938, for example, he requested that a Russian member of his Customs staff, Assistant Tidesurveyor Pogodin, be transferred. 'He just does not fit into Kowloon', Forbes reported, 'where, indeed, all the senior foreign staff should be of British nationality if our Service is to be most effectively represented in Hong Kong'.[113] Early the following year Forbes reiterated his point, stressing that 'officers of British nationality are almost essential in this district, for in all our frontier work we come into contact with Hong Kong Government officers and

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[109] CSA, 679(1) 31644, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1934-35', enclosure in confidential letter, Commissioner de Luca, Tianjin, to IG Maze, 7 February 1932.

[110] Russian Customs employee, Maltchenko, for example, who petitioned for promotion in 1929, was well-aware of his country's inferior status in the Customs, arguing that because China's trade with Russia amounted to Hk. Tls. 99 million in 1927 and because there were no Russian Deputy Commissioners or Commissioners he should be promoted. See CSA, 679(1) 31639, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1929', enclosures in confidential letter, Commissioner Myers, Shanghai, to IG Maze, 17 May 1929.

[111] See *Documents Illustrative,* vol. II, circular no. 894, 5 May 1899, pp. 193-212.

[112] See, *Documents Illustrative,* vol. II, pp. 575-86. Also see Bickers, 'Anglo-Japanese Relations and Treaty Port China'.

[113] CSA, 679(9) 1429, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1938; to and from C.I.-Kowloon', confidential letter, Commissioner Forbes, Kowloon, to Staff Secretary Hu, 18 July 1938.

nationality plays a large part in promoting harmonious relations'.[114] For Forbes, the implications of nationality resonated far beyond overcoming language barriers; for him, a thoroughly British staff meant respect for the Customs and co-operation with its work.

The question of British privilege in the foreign staff was of less significance than other thornier issues of national representation. Conflict in Europe could cause national tensions to rear their head, as evidenced by the impact of the First World War on Customs harmony. German Customs men quickly became targets of anti-German hatred from men of allied nationalities in China, and in certain ports Germans found themselves in considerable danger. In September 1914 Aglen warned the Swatow Commissioner to 'keep an eye on the German members of your Outdoor Staff and do not under any circumstances give any of them leave to visit Hong Kong either secretly or openly. People are worked up just now and may attempt something foolish'.[115] Later that year, in a letter to German Commissioner Wilzer, Aglen mused; 'it is a thousand pities it [the war] could not be confined to Europe but must invade the Far East where our countries have so many mutual interests and where we English have so many German personal friends'.[116]

Furthermore, as the numbers of Russians and Japanese in China expanded the Customs needed to take into account different political considerations. Although White Russian migration to China after 1917 created a ready pool of potential Customs workers, Russians were often difficult to place in the Service, usually for political reasons which often took the form of conflict between Soviet and White Russians in China.[117] In 1932, for example, the Tianjin Commissioner wrote to Maze requesting that he cancel the impending transfer to Harbin of Examiner Donelevsky, who was 'very anxious not to return to Harbin where he believes that he still has many enemies among the Soviet Russians, and where he states that his life was

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[114] CSA, 679(9) 1406, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1939: to and from Chungking to Kowloon', confidential letter, Commissioner Forbes, Kowloon, to Staff Secretary Hu, 17 January 1939.
[115] CSA, 679(1) 32834, 'IG semi-official letters to general public, vol. 8', confidential letter from IG Aglen to Commissioner Lay, Swatow, 9th September 1914.
[116] CSA, 679(1) 32834, 'IG semi-official letters to general public, vol. 8', confidential letter from IG Aglen to Commissioner Wilzer, 14 August 1914.
[117] Another group seeking refuge in China from the 1930s onwards was that of German and Austrian Jews, some of whom were employed by the Customs as medical officers. See Ristaino, *Port of Last Resort,* Chapter Four, 'Nazi Victims find Refuge', pp. 98-123, for an account of the Jewish refugee community in Shanghai and Chapter Two, 'Refugee Arrivals Break the Calm,' pp. 18-53, for an account of the arrival of White Russian refugees in Shanghai.

threatened several times during his previous spell of duty there from 1915 to 1920'.[118] For some Russian employees the pressure of these suspicions was too much to bear. In 1937, Staff Secretary Hu forewarned the Kowloon Commissioner that Assistant Tidesurveyor Pogodin, about to be transferred from Shanghai to Kowloon, had recently experienced a relapse of a 'nervous condition' provoked by the difficult wartime conditions in Shanghai. 'He now imagines that the Japanese are after him', Hu explained, an idea which had 'got such a firm hold in his mind that he actually tendered his resignation in order that he might get out of China'.[119] Pogodin resigned from the Service the following year. Pogodin's fear of impending assassination by the Japanese was most probably delusional, yet this episode is nevertheless an example, albeit an extreme one, of the precarious and sometimes dangerous position Russians working in China believed themselves to be in. As stateless refugees the unenviable position of Russians in the Customs was also exacerbated by their lack of extraterritorial rights after 1917—and their low status in treaty port society— which rendered them vulnerable to threats and pressures from Chinese and foreign authorities in China.[120]

Alternatively, some employees had a trying time in the Service because they were suspected of serving Soviet interests under the guise of working as Customs officials. In 1936 the Guanwushu instructed the Shanghai Commissioner to investigate Russian Examiner D. A. Morozoff along with British Boat Officer J. A. Crossland and Latvian Outdoor man J. D. Grundel on charges of passing knowledge of exports and imports to the Soviet government and of abusing their Customs positions in order to covertly disseminate propaganda and transport spies. There was

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[118] CSA, 679(1) 31970, 'Tientsin semi-official, 1931-33', semi-official no. 891, Commissioner de Luca, Tianjin, to IG Maze, 1 April 1932. Donelevsky's transfer was duly cancelled, although there was speculation that his fears were slightly delusional.

[119] CSA, 679(9) 14237, 'Staff Secretary's office- semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1937, Kiungchow-Santuao', confidential letter, Staff Secretary Hu to Commissioner Forbes, Kowloon, 16 December 1937. Earlier correspondence between Hu and Pogodin's previous Commissioner at Lappa described how Pogodin had taken to sleeping with all doors and windows locked and shuttered and with three firearms close to hand, such was his 'fear of being murdered'. See CSA, 679(9) 14237, 'Staff Secretary's office; semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1937, Kiungchow-Santuao', confidential letter, Commissioner Bradley, Kowloon, to Staff Secretary Hu, 15 February 1937.

[120] In 1931, for example, the senior Assistant at the Lahasusu Customs station near Harbin, Smirnoff, was asked by the Harbin Superintendent to assist in an opium-smuggling scheme. When Smirnoff refused the Superintendent threatened that; 'he was a Russian émigré and was likely to find himself in trouble and later arrested by a military court and shot as he had no protection'. See CSA, 691(1) 31642, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners', confidential letter, Commissioner Prettejohn, Harbin, to IG Maze, 21 October 1931.

scant evidence to back up these charges, which seemed to be largely based on tenuous claims that Morozoff's wife was a 'notorious Soviet spy' and that Grundel was somehow 'connected with the USSR'.[121] The Shanghai Commissioner gave each man a warning and the matter was not pursued further, yet this incident nonetheless demonstrates how easily Russian employees, and those who associated with them, could fall under suspicion in this period of increasing Chinese mistrust of and lack of respect for Russians.

Japanese Customs employees after 1936 occupied a very different position to their Russian colleagues. The Japanese Customs presence, bolstered as it was by aggressive political and military power, generated more political complications for the Inspectorate and antipathy within the staff than did any other national group. Unsurprisingly, Japanese occupation meant that the Customs was pressured to employ increasingly large numbers of Japanese staff. The obligation to work alongside 'enemies' was an infinite source of resentment for the Chinese staff, and also provoked fear of being tarred as collaborators. In 1938, for example, the Canton Commissioner requested immediate transfer for one of his Chinese clerks, Mei Huan-tsao, because he 'has developed anti-Japanism to such a degree that he feels he might not be able to control himself in such as office as this, where he would be brought into contact with the Japanese'.[122] The Inspectorate was inundated with similar requests for transfers from those unable to tolerate working with Japanese colleagues during the period of occupation. This overt hostility reached its height when Chinese employees were compelled to work under a Japanese Commissioner. In this situation Chinese staff often felt powerless to complain about unfair treatment at the hands of their Commissioner or to protest against Japanese occupation. Occasionally, Japanese Commissioners would deliberately suppress actions on the part of the Chinese staff which appeared to threaten Japanese interests and control. In 1933 Commissioner Kurematsu in Yichang, in contravention of Inspectorate rules, failed to forward a petition from his Chinese staff who desired to form a 'patriotic fund'. Maze was furious at Kurematsu's actions:

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[121] CSA, 679(1) 14234, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1936', enclosure in confidential letter, Staff Secretary Hu to Commissioner Barentzen, Shanghai, 20 January 1936.

[122] CSA, 679(1) 1426, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1938: to and from IG-Chungking', confidential letter, Canton Commissioner, Foster Hall, to Staff Secretary Hu, 7 December 1938.

> During the past twelve months the relations between China and Japan have gone from bad to worse, but nevertheless I have consistently endeavoured, where possible, to safeguard the interests of the Japanese employees in the Customs. I have informed the Japanese Minister, however, that in the face of such ill-judged and quite unnecessary incidents as the above, it is very difficult for me to continue to prevent friction.[123]

Evidently, long-serving Japanese staff in the Customs occupied an awkward position as Japanese aggression in China intensified. To some degree the deployment of various nationalities in the Customs had always been politically sensitive, yet the Japanese presence in the Customs was politicised to an unprecedented degree in the 1930s and 1940s.[124] For Chinese Customs staff, working under a Japanese Commissioner was tantamount to working for the enemy.

The 1930s also saw growing rivalry between Chinese and foreign staff. Although explicit incidents of racist behaviour on the part of the foreign staff were seldom recounted in correspondence with the Inspectorate, and in spite of the Service's position as a Chinese government organisation, unequal treatment of Chinese and foreigners was entrenched in the staff structure. The first Chinese recruited as an Assistant to the Indoor Staff was not appointed until 1912.[125] Until 1927, when foreign recruitment ended and accelerated promotion of Chinese staff began, Chinese employees received less pay and benefits and occupied the low-ranking positions. The efforts of the Nationalist government to sinify the Customs after 1928, and the staunch anti-imperialism of the ruling party, however, exacerbated tensions between foreigners and Chinese. Chinese employees now had the confidence and authority to voice their dissatisfaction with foreign control of the Customs and with the foreign presence in China more broadly. In 1932, for example, it was discovered that a Chinese Assistant in the Santuao custom house, Mr Ngu Iong Hieng, had been zealously disseminating anti-foreign propaganda and urging local residents to boycott foreign goods—obviously objectionable behaviour for an employee of an organisation charged with administering foreign trade.[126] Ngu, although warned

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[123] CSA, 679(1) 32083, 'Ichang semi-official, 1932-33', semi-official nos. 689-92, Commissioner Kurematsu to IG Maze and replies, 10 March- 4 April 1933.
[124] See Bickers, 'Anglo-Japanese Relations and Treaty Port China'.
[125] The Customs did, however, have a better record in this respect than some other overseas services. From 1904 onwards all candidates for Eastern Cadetships, for example, were required to prove European descent on both sides of the family before being eligible for a post. See Miners, *Hong Kong Under Imperial Rule*, p. 85.
[126] CSA, 679(1) 31643, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1931-32', confidential letter, Commissioner Chen Tso-chu, Santuao, to IG Maze, 16 December 1932. Ngu's activities included 'denouncing those in possession of common articles of foreign origin', 'reproaching

about his behaviour, did not, however, lose his job over the incident and continued with his Customs career until his retirement two years later.

Chinese staff were also becoming more vocal about their unfair treatment at the hands of the Service after 1928. In 1932, for example, a petition from the Shanghai Clerks demanding equal status with Assistants, pointing out that they essentially performed the same work.[127] This protest sparked a flurry of similar petitions from various ports, forcing the Staff Secretary to launch a Customs-wide investigation into the work performed by Clerks in order to determine whether they were eligible for Assistant status.[128] The growing political accountability of the Foreign Inspectorate meant that Chinese demands needed to be taken seriously and be more thoroughly considered than previously. It also meant that the Inspectorate needed to be extremely careful in its allocation of senior positions. As the Staff Secretary cautioned in a letter to the Kowloon Commissioner in 1937:

> It should be considered that with keen competition from the Chinese in the Service, coupled with the watchful eye of the Kuan-wu Shu nowadays, the utmost care must be exercised in allotting billets, especially to foreigners, in order not to cause adverse criticism and bring discredit to the foreign staff as a whole.[129]

Foreign staff who were incompetent or unsuited to certain ports were much more likely to be condemned by the government, by local communities and by their colleagues in this period.

Inevitably, many of the foreign staff were uncomfortable with the appointment of Chinese to higher positions, which dealt a blow to 'foreign prestige'—as they saw it—in the Customs. Reporting on currents of discontent amongst the junior foreign staff in Tianjin in 1929, Commissioner Howell surmised that 'a dislike of the prospect of serving under the orders of a Chinese' was the cause.[130] Although Howell avowed that there was no place in the Customs for men who objected to Chinese authority, other senior foreign employees were less tolerant. In response to Swatow Commissioner Hilliard's adverse comments about his Chinese deputy, Mr. T. Manuel

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his colleagues dressed in foreign clothing or uniform', and producing 'anti-foreign posters and sarcastic pictures'.

[127] CSA, 679(1) 32229, 'Shanghai semi-official, 1936', enclosure in semi-official letter, Commissioner Barentzen, Shanghai, to IG Maze, 12 August 1936.

[128] CSA, 679(1) 14235, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence: to and from Amoy-Chungking', confidential letter, Staff Secretary Hu to all Commissioners, 21 July 1937.

[129] CSA, 679(1) 14237, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1937: Kiungchow-Santuao', confidential letter, Staff Secretary Hu to Commissioner Forbes, Kowloon, 28 September 1937.

[130] CSA, 679(1) 31639, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1929', confidential letter, Commissioner Howell, Tianjin, to IG Maze, 29 July 1929.

Wong, in 1934 the Staff Secretary was moved to write; 'I regard your reference to the respective merits or advantages of Chinese and foreign staff as illogical: it is the man, not the nationality, that is of importance'.[131] In spite of his censorious tone, however, the Staff Secretary begrudgingly sent a foreign Deputy Commissioner to replace Wong.

Although Customs work was rarely exacting for junior men, a number of factors could conspire to make working for the Customs a difficult experience. Much depended on the specific local circumstances in the ports to which men were posted; although employees were transferred regularly, a stretch working under trying or even dangerous conditions could be a demoralizing and discouraging experience for Customs men. Nationality also significantly influenced the experience of working in the Customs; whereas men of 'safe' nationalities, such as British and American, came up against few obstacles on account of their national origins before the 1940s, Russians and Japanese, for example, faced growing hostility in their working lives. Furthermore, Service structures, hierarchies, and systems of transfer and promotion, although highly-organised on the surface, bred considerable discontent amongst employees. All these factors could combine to impair the careers of individuals and gave rise to latent dissatisfaction with the Customs and with China underneath the surface of the everyday working world. More broadly construed, the Customs example highlights the sheer breadth of experiences—positive, negative and unremarkable—of those who embarked upon overseas careers, and the range of personal, professional and political circumstances which could influence their eventual success or failure.

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[131] CSA, 679(9) 1421, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1933-35: to and from Shasi-Wuhu', confidential letter, Staff Secretary Lawford to Commissioner Hilliard, Swatow, 16 March 1934.

3) Stuck in the middle?: Consuls, Chinese officials, local communities and the Customs

It was in the course of the foreign staff's interactions with individuals and authorities outside the Customs establishment, however, that this commitment to disinterested service was most severely put to the test. Although the foreign staff were constantly reminded that they were, first and foremost, Customs men and that China's interests therefore took precedent, this sometimes conflicted with the competing national interests within the Service. Furthermore, whilst preaching about the need for steadfast dedication to China, successive IGs were equally keen to promote British interests through their control over the Service. Customs men, therefore, were required learn how to mediate between these competing loyalties and authorities in the course of their work. In this section I will examine the interactions between senior Customs employees and Chinese officials—in particular the Superintendent—foreign consular authorities, and local communities.

Chinese officials

From its inception the Customs operated under a dual system of control whereby the foreign Commissioner in each port worked alongside a Chinese Superintendent—the Commissioner controlled administrative affairs and the Superintendent was in charge of political business and of collecting the Customs revenue until the Inspectorate assumed responsibility for this after 1911. For Fairbank this system of joint administration of the Customs perfectly illustrated his thesis of 'synarchy'. In Fairbank's view the Commissioners 'maintained a careful parallel relationship' to the Superintendents and 'the foreign inspectorate of customs thus functioned in a partnership'.[132] Joint administration of the Customs establishment was, however, never entirely harmonious. Predictably, this situation led to incessant discussions defining the relative jurisdiction and authority of each party. In an 1864 circular, Hart urged his staff to remember that the presence of foreign staff in the Customs was an understandably sensitive issue for Superintendents, and recommended that 'the more the Commissioners keep in the background, the better will it be for the duties they have to perform, and less will be the chances of their

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[132] Fairbank, 'Synarchy under the Treaties', pp. 222-3.

becoming the objects of ill-feeling'. He added, rather confusingly, that although in reality the Commissioner and Superintendent were of equal rank, the Commissioner must give the *appearance* of exercising less power than the Superintendent; 'A judicious sinking of self will not in any way derogate from one's respectability or real influence', Hart instructed.[133] This circular and future directives on the same topic did little to enlighten about the status and jurisdiction of the Commissioner *vis-à-vis* his Chinese counterpart. Less than ten years later Hart was prompted to write a lengthy circular in response to complaints from Commissioners who felt 'disheartened' and 'chagrined' because they did not possess 'real' authority. However, in a document of more than ten pages Hart still managed to circumvent the issues and avoid clearly defining the status of each party.[134] This confusion continued throughout the nineteenth century. In 1877, for example, a handbook outlining the basic guiding principles for Commissioners instructed that he was 'appointed to *assist* the Chinese Superintendent of Customs' and that 'while maintaining the rights of your own position, you will carefully refrain from encroaching on those of others'.[135] Successive Inspectorate circulars obfuscated the issue, vacillating between declaring that the Commissioner and Superintendent were equals, advising that the Commissioner should give the appearance of being obedient to the Superintendent, and warning Commissioners not to undermine Customs prestige through submissiveness to their Chinese colleague. The Commissioner trod a fine line between respecting the Superintendent's position and damaging 'foreign prestige' in the Customs by yielding entirely to Chinese authority.

This was a delicate balance to strike, however, as many Commissioners testified. In 1914 Commissioner Unwin at Shanghai claimed that he had 'ceased since 1912 to be the recognised head of the local Customs establishment' and that 'native officials, high and low, have a natural tendency to address the Superintendent on all occasions and to treat him generally as the *de facto* as well as the *de jure* head

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[133] See *Documents Illustrative,* vol. I, circular no. 8 of 1864 (first series), pp. 39-40. A further circular on the subject of the relationship between Commissioners and Superintendents sympathised with Commissioners who felt powerless in relation to their Chinese counterparts, yet warned them not to undermine native authority. See *Documents Illustrative,* vol. 1, circular no. 24 of 1873 (first series), pp. 312-13.

[134] *Documents Illustrative,* vol. I, circular no. 24 of 1873, pp. 312-24. For example, Hart began the circular by claiming that both parties were of equal standing yet then went on to imply that the Superintendent was, in fact, superior in status to the Commissioner.

[135] *Provisional Instructions for the Guidance of the In-Door Staff*, p. 1.

of the Customs'.[136] Unwin's comments were perhaps born out of paranoia about the Commissioner's position in the new political landscape after the 1912 revolution rather than the actual state of affairs; if anything the foreign Commissioner's powers increased after 1912 when the Inspectorate assumed direct control of the collection and banking of customs revenues, a responsibility which had previously been that of the Superintendent's staff. Yet they nonetheless demonstrate how the need to cultivate an equal relationship with the Superintendent whilst at the same time maintaining the standing and authority of the foreign Commissioner remained a sensitive issue well into the twentieth century. Some were successful in their attempts to appease the Superintendent whilst upholding their own position. In 1937 the Swatow Commissioner began work on mollifying his notoriously difficult Superintendent from the moment of his arrival in the port, reporting; 'It appears to me to be very necessary to conciliate him and I endeavoured to do this by assuring him that it was my intention to meet his views and to work with him to the limit of my powers'.[137] In this case friendly relations were maintained and the pride and status of both the Commissioner and Superintendent remained undamaged, yet achieving and maintaining such an equilibrium clearly involved continual care and negotiation.

This ambiguity surrounding the exact status of and relative levels of power exercised by the Commissioner and Superintendent generated countless disputes, most of which appeared trivial on the surface. Far from being resolved, in the final decades of the Foreign Inspectorate's existence this question continued to surface. One of many examples occurred in 1934 when the Chefoo Commissioner sparked the Superintendent's rage by replying to an enquiry from his colleague after a lapse of ten days. This breach of protocol was a serious issue, and the officiating Inspector General was forced to reprimand him:

> You have provoked the Superintendent's ire and have caused me much embarrassment by giving him a pretext for raising that awkward question of the relative positions of Superintendent and Commissioner, a question which only by strenuous fighting has been held in the background by Sir Frederick Maze... Finally I must express my disappointment that you have not been successful in one of the first duties of a Commissioner, namely to maintain friendly relations in his official intercourse with the Superintendent.[138]

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[136] CSA, 679(1) 17616, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Shanghai, 1901-08', Shanghai dispatch no. 14,308, Commissioner Unwin to Commissioner Wade, 1914.
[137] CSA, 679(1) 32374, 'Swatow semi-official, 1937', semi-official letter no. 817, Commissioner Anderson, Swatow, to IG Maze, 16 November 1937.
[138] CSA, 679(1) 31648, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1934', confidential letter, officiating IG Lawford to Commissioner Wallas, Chefoo, 7 August 1934. After the

Rather than diminishing in importance, this issue became particularly problematic in the 1930s when Guomindang anti-imperialist campaigns made Superintendents increasingly sensitive to slights from their foreign colleagues.

Commissioners themselves could be highly critical of their Superintendents' conduct, so much so that in 1934 the opinions of Commissioners in twenty-seven ports regarding their Chinese colleagues were canvassed. It was found that many Commissioners were exasperated with their colleagues' apparent lack of interest in Customs business—fifteen Commissioners reported that their Superintendents were frequently absent from their posts, often for long stretches of time, and that in some cases they had never even met their Chinese colleague.[139] Although Superintendents were often described as helpful and accommodating, they were just as frequently decried as crooks. In fact, a few years previously, in 1931, the Harbin Commissioner accused his Superintendent of masterminding an opium smuggling ring under the guise of investigating an anti-smuggling project. After a parcel of opium addressed to the Superintendent was seized by the Assistant-in-Charge, Mr. Pooth, he began to issue threats to the Customs staff involved, warning Pooth that 'being a Chinese he had no business to disclose their opium activities to the Commissioner, a foreigner, and that they would eventually get even with him'.[140] Clearly, incidents such as these and the frequent absences of some Superintendents from their posts compounded foreign Customs officials' preconceptions of the corruptness and inefficiency of the Chinese bureaucracy, and relations became strained as a result.[141]

Although during bouts of military conflict friction with troops and military authorities inevitably occurred, during peacetime Commissioners more often than not reported that relations with non-Customs officials were cordial. In fact, Commissioners occasionally acted as advisors or mediators for the Chinese authorities

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Commissioner failed to reply to his letter the Superintendent wrote a second letter asking him to reply 'without further delay'. The Commissioner then objected to the use of the phrase 'without further delay' as undermining his authority.

[139] CSA, 679(1) 31646, 'Confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1933-34', 'Summary of Commissioners' reports on Superintendents', 1934.

[140] CSA 679(1) 31642, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1931', confidential letter from Commissioner Prettejohn, Harbin, to IG Maze, 21 October 1931. This incident was eventually resolved after the Commissioner used a letter incriminating the Superintendent in the smuggling to secure assurances of protection for his staff.

[141] Another example of the Superintendent's conduct seeming to confirm foreign perceptions of the corrupt nature of Chinese bureaucracy occurred in 1931 when the Tianjin Commissioner reported that the Superintendent had caused trouble by insisting on appointing an old school-friend to the Conservancy Commission without interview or examination, much the annoyance of the rest of the board. See CSA, 679(1) 31969, 'Tientsin semi-official, 1931', semi-official letter, Commissioner de Luca, Tianjin, to IG Maze, 17 February 1931.

when the situation called for the arbitration of a disinterested outsider. In 1931, for example, the Commissioner at Yichang reported that he had recently helped to negotiate a settlement between the Chinese magistrate and the Japanese consul over the presence of a Japanese gunboat at Yichang. The Commissioner wrote to the IG:

> You ought to be interested to learn too that what an unexpected part a Commissioner was forced to play was undoubtedly due to his dual character of being a Chinese official as well as a foreign national subject and I am also happy to think that my Chinese friends did not forget me at such a moment when an act of mediation was necessary.[142]

Despite the Customs' protestations of political impartiality and its avowal to avoid involvement in politics, its unique position as a foreign-run service in China meant that senior foreign employees became unavoidably embroiled in disputes between foreign and Chinese authorities.

Consuls

Contrary to what might be expected disputes between Customs Commissioners and foreign consular and diplomatic representatives over their relative spheres of authority were commonplace. The relatively amiable competition between a Customs Commissioner and a British consul stationed at a remote outport even formed the main plotline of Paul and Veronica King's novel, *The Commissioner's Dilemma*.[143] In an 1873 circular Hart warned his Commissioners not to 'outstrip the Consuls as an attorney for the public', which would only breed ill-will.[144] The consuls themselves were also to blame for discord. As early as 1881, Hart complained bitterly about consular interference in Customs matters:

> If England would allow us to take our chance and lead in War as we teach in peace, and if English Consuls were warned to keep their hands off (and give support to) Englishmen in Chinese employ, we could make England and China the best of friends.[145]

Exhibiting favouritisms for certain foreign powers sat uncomfortably with the Customs' dictum of disinterested service of the Chinese government and consuls were

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[142] CSA, 679(1) 32082, 'Ichang Semi-Official, 1930-31', semi-official letter, Commissioner Kurematsu, Yichang, to IG Maze, 13 October 1931.
[143] See King, *The Commissioner's Dilemma*. During his career in the Customs (1874-1921) King was often at loggerheads with the consuls in his port. See King, *In the Chinese Customs*, especially King's account of his clash with the British consul in Pakhoi over King's helping a destitute American national under British jurisdiction, pp.173-5.
[144] *Documents Illustrative*, vol. I, circular no. 24 of 1873 (first series), p. 323. Paradoxically, however, in his 1877 instructions for Commissioners Hart advised that 'you are to exert yourself to secure for Consularly unrepresented foreigners as many facilities for engaging in trade as would be enjoyed by them were there a Consul at the port'. *Provisional Instructions for the Guidance of the Indoor Staff* (Shanghai, 1877), p. 6.
[145] *The IG in Peking*, vol. 1, letter Z/59, Hart to Campbell, 16 October 1881, p. 390.

often less than understanding about the reluctance of Customs employees under their protection to promote their national interests.

In the ports, a central source of resentment between consul and Commissioner was extraterritoriality, a treaty clause which generated numerous disputes about the parameters of the Chinese government's control over its foreign Customs employees. The anomalous position of the foreign Customs staff, as foreigners and as employees of the Chinese government, led to endless confusions over which authority they were ultimately responsible to when carrying out their Customs work. This quandary came to a head when Customs men became embroiled in legal disputes. As Eileen Scully has observed, 'intertwined forces of race, class and nationality made consular courts in China a "place of contest" not only between sojourners and natives, but among foreigners themselves'.[146] One such high-profile incident occurred in 1880 when a British Watcher at Canton, E. Page, who had shot and killed a Chinese smuggler whilst on duty, was summoned by the British consul to stand trial for manslaughter. Hart seized this opportunity to make a point about the legal accountability of foreign Customs employees. As the Chinese authorities believed Page to have been acting in the line of duty and as he had been acting in his capacity as a Customs officer at the time of the shooting, Hart argued, the arrest was unlawful. Hart promised to defend Page until the end and to prosecute the consul for unlawful arrest, vowing to 'fight out on both lines to the nth', but was eventually forced to back down in the face of diplomatic ire.[147] In 1883, a similar case emerged, involving a British Examiner in the Outdoor Staff of the Customs, Mr. Roberts, who was imprisoned for contempt of court when he withheld evidence when acting as a witness in an opium theft case tried at the British Supreme Court. Roberts's reluctance to testify grew out of a rule that forbade Customs employees from giving evidence that had come to their knowledge purely through Customs work without permission from the Chinese government. This case led to a showdown between the Shanghai Commissioner (Glover) and the British consul (Hughes) about their respective jurisdiction over British Customs employees. For both concerned it was a matter of principle. Whereas the consul was at pains to assert his legal control over *all* British nationals in China, claiming that 'all British

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[146] Scully, *Bargaining with the State from Afar*, p. 8. Scully describes the relationship between extraterritorialised Americans and their state as a 'citizenship regime' in which US nationals were expected to submit to regulation by the state in order to demonstrate their continuing commitment to upholding their US citizenship (p. 19).

[147] See *Archives of China's Imperial Maritime Customs*, vol. 1, letter A/24, Hart to Campbell, 8 December 1880, p. 581; letter Z/37, 30 December 1880, p. 590; letter A/32, 24 April 1884, p. 629.

subjects are bound to respect' the rules of the Supreme Court, no matter what their job, the Commissioner was adamant that his staff, when acting in their official positions as Customs employees, were categorically *not* subject to British law. In the end, after the quarrel reached a stalemate Roberts was acquitted and released.[148]

Disputes about the extent of legal jurisdiction over Customs employees continued to occasionally surface in the twentieth-century Customs at Shanghai. In 1929, when a Norwegian Outdoor employee, Halvorsen, was called as a witness for the defence on behalf of the Commercial Express and Storage Company, Commissioner Myers refused to allow Halvorsen to testify without permission from the Chinese government. Heated correspondence between the US consul-general, the counsel for the defence and the Commissioner ensued, but Myers stood his ground. Reporting on the incident to Maze he righteously declared that, 'I question the right of any Court, other than a Chinese Court, to serve a Summons on an employee of the Chinese Government, whatever his nationality may be', and added that if Halvorsen chose to attend court he 'would be treated as having severed his connection with the Service'.[149] Again, this dispute hinged on the question of the ambiguous legal position of Customs employees. The Commissioner was unwavering in his assertion that, whilst performing their work, foreign Customs men should be considered as subject to Chinese authority and outside of the control and protection of consuls.[150] To bow to consular orders in this case would have undermined the Inspectorate's insistence that it was a Chinese government institution and not an arm of imperialism in China.

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[148] CSA, 679(2) 1515, 'Shanghai Customs: Dispatches from IG, 1883 (July-Dec)', IG dispatch no. 2,400 to Shanghai, 11 September 1883. Hart did, however, admonish Glover for his obstinate behaviour, scolding that the British authorities' requests 'ought to have been met by you in such a way as to further the ends of justice and avoid raising a very difficult, and for us a very embarrassing, international question'. Hart also claimed that the Commissioner's obstruction in this case would weaken future assertions of the Customs' right to keep silent in similar situations.

[149] CSA, 679(1) 32224, 'Shanghai semi-official correspondence, 1929-30', Shanghai semi-official no. 851, Myers to Maze, 16 April 1929. A slightly different type of case, but one which nonetheless resulted in friction between the Customs and foreign authorities over their relative jurisdictions, occurred in 1933 in Kowloon when a Customs officer, Mr. Perry, accidentally strayed into Hong Kong waters whilst carrying out preventive work. This caused considerable tension between the Customs and the British authorities in Hong Kong. See CSA, 679(1) 31645, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1933', confidential letter, Commissioner Ensor, Kowloon, to IG Maze, 13 November 1933.

[150] In any case, as Eileen Scully points out, the power of the US Court for China over US nationals was waning in the interwar period as the US government began to distance itself from the implications of extraterritoriality in the face of increasing Guomindang opposition. See Scully, *Bargaining with the State from Afar*, Chapter Six, 'Interwar Demise of Consular Jurisdiction', pp. 163-94.

Tensions between Commissioners and consuls over their relative spheres of authority usually emerged in less high-profile cases, yet this friction was always present beneath the surface of apparently friendly relations. Furthermore, consuls often resented Customs control of foreign trade believing that, as a foreign-run service, the Customs should be doing its utmost to further foreign trading interests. British consul Sir John Pratt, who served at various ports in China throughout the 1920s, was particularly vituperative about the Commissioners he encountered. Pratt's argument seemed to be with the Foreign Inspectorate as a whole—in a diatribe against the Nanjing Commissioner's apparent obstruction of British trade in 1923 he claimed that 'the Maritime Customs are regarded as a greater obstruction to trade than the native officials themselves', an attitude which had led to a 'stand up fight' between Pratt and the Commissioner.[151] Commissioners, too, could find consuls obstructive to Customs business. In 1919, for example, the Tianjin Commissioner complained that foreign nationals caught smuggling often went unpunished by the consular courts.[152] Furthermore, consular representatives were sometimes resentful of the Customs' refusal to grant them special privileges in the spirit of foreign camaraderie. A case in point is an attack on the Customs Commissioner stationed in Macao, Mr Pichon, by the Italian 'consular agent', Mr. Rodrigues, in 1932 over the non-issuance of a passport. Rodrigues harboured a long-standing grudge against the Customs, claiming that they refused to recognise his authority as the representative of Italian interests in the port.[153] Matters reached a head when Rodrigues was refused a passport for a shooting expedition to mainland China; he was so enraged as a result that he accosted Pichon in his rickshaw and, in the words of the Commissioner, 'hit me under the jaw and knocked me practically senseless'. Rodrigues then proceeded to lie in wait for

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[151] TNA, London, FO228/3497, letter from Pratt to the Peking Legation, 21 March 1923. See also Pratt's objections to the Wuhu Commissioner made whilst Shanghai consul-general in 1924: Correspondence between Pratt, British Minister Ronald Macleay and Aglen, December 1924. P. D. Coates suggests that Pratt, an Anglo-Indian, frequently came into conflict with foreigners in China as a result of racism on the part of foreign communities. See Coates, *China Consuls,* pp. 429-30. Pratt was also outspoken about various issues affecting British settlers in China, such as treaty revision. See Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire.* Pratt is mentioned throughout, but see especially his comments on Chiang Kai-Shek's rise to power (pp. 244-5), on the Shanghai question in the late 1930s (pp.270-72), and treaty revision (pp.182-3).

[152] See CSA, 679(1) 17591, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Tientsin; 1900-28', Tianjin dispatch no. 6,657, handing-over-charge memo., Commissioner Maze to Deputy Commissioner Walsham, 28 October 1919.

[153] The Commissioner may well have been suspicious of Rodrigues' authority as a 'consular agent'. Abuses of the consular system in China were common, with many individuals claiming to hold consular appointments on behalf of countries—usually South or Central American nations— which were previously without consular representation for personal gain.

Pichon outside the government offices; on his adversary's approach Rodrigues 'rushed towards me in a frantic state shouting repeatedly: "You will not go in"' and proceeded to again attack him.[154] Although such extreme incidents were rare, the sentiment expressed so forcefully here by the Italian consular agent was not. Consuls were frequently aggrieved by the Customs' refusal to bend the rules to give them and their countries and unfair trading or personal advantage.

Conflict between the Commissioner and foreign consuls was even more overt in small, isolated ports, far away from the restraining control of central authority. In small ports, moreover, the British consul and the Customs Commissioner were often the *only* foreign officials presiding and therefore could become engaged in one-on-one battles for authority over the foreign community. In the isolated port of Tengyue in south-western China in 1931, this competition grew into seething antipathy between the British consul (Wyatt-Smith) and the Commissioner (Macdonald). As the culmination of a series of attempts to destroy the Customs' reputation, the consul claimed that the Commissioner was knowingly employing opium smugglers as his servants and that almost all Customs staff were embezzling the revenue. The Commissioner condemned this 'dastardly and unprovoked attack', dismissing it as a result of the consul's 'monomania against the Customs', and went on to thoroughly assassinate the consul's character, claiming he was a well-known alcoholic, a 'megalomaniac', and was 'in the habit of conducting himself with local Shan prostitutes'.[155] The consul's unconventional behaviour was perhaps not unusual in one-man posts such as Tengyue; P. D. Coates has speculated that 'some of these consulates might have been expressly designed to breed ill-health, indolence, eccentricity, and alcoholism'.[156] Bearing this in mind, battles of egos such as this could lead to critical situations when left unchecked in a small-port environment.

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[154] See CSA, 679(1) 17328, 'Assault on Commissioner and Assistant by Portuguese merchant and consular agent for Italy, Lappa, 1932'. Four days later Rodrigues also assaulted Customs Assistant de Garcia, against whom he held a particularly strong grudge, at the Lappa cinema, aided in his attack by his wife. In 1913 another case of an alleged assault on a Customs man by a British consul (and his wife) occurred. An Indoor man stationed at Fuzhou, Lyons, alleged that the British consul, Werner, had physically attacked him with a whip (along with the consul's wife, who contributed to the attack by beating Lyons with a stick) in the club bar because he had broken a lamp at the consulate. Lyons appeared in court on a charge of deliberately breaking consulate property, although the incident was smoothed over after he apologised to Werner and his wife. See CSA, 679(9) 2484, 'Sealed packet containing confidential Z letters from IG to NRS, 1908-13', letter from Commissioner King, Fuzhou, to IG Aglen, 18 October 1913.

[155] CSA, 679(1) 31642, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1931', personal letter, Commissioner Macdonald, Tengyue, to IG Maze, 13 May 1931.

[156] Coates, *China Consuls*, p. 160.

Local communities

Friction between the Customs establishment and the public in the course of its work was perhaps inevitable considering its policing and regulatory functions. Especially during the early years of the Foreign Inspectorate and whenever the Customs established itself in a new port considerable displeasure emanated from local trading communities who resented the imposition of new regulations and the consequent erosion of long-standing procedures. In 1881 in Swatow, for example, the Customs was caught up in an ongoing dispute with the Swatow Merchants' Guild after various merchants were fined for consistently evading Customs regulations. Commissioner Huber found the guild a formidable enemy, reporting; 'They are a proud and powerful body accustomed to dictate to the other merchants foreign and native and sometimes to the local authorities also' and were therefore 'probably smarting under the thought that the Customs have carried the point against them'. The Customs was placed in a weak position as the Swatow Taotai and an army general who held sway in the district sided with the Guild, although the disagreement was eventually resolved when a magistrate was brought in to adjudicate.[157] In some cases, opposition to Customs regulations from powerful merchant interests could lead to merchants obtaining undue trading concessions. In 1906 the Tianjin Commissioner complained that merchants had been too readily granted 'facilities' by the Customs in the past, and warned that:

> Beyond the host of *old* "facilities" there are many *new* ones which the mercantile and shipping community are constantly trying to coax, wheedle or bluff us into, and the Commissioner has to be ever on the alert against this local tendency and see that no new "facilities" are granted without the most careful consideration of every pro and con.[158]

Far from being an all-powerful force able to effortlessly enforce Western-style customs procedures in the ports, the Customs could find it difficult to resist the pressures of influential merchant bodies. When pitted against merchant interests intent on extracting trading advantages the Customs sometimes failed to break the trading habits and 'corrupt' procedures already operating in the ports.[159]

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[157] CSA, 679(2) 1867, 'Swatow Customs: Dispatches and enclosures to IG, 1878-81', correspondence, Commissioner Huber, Swatow, to IG Hart, July-August 1881.

[158] CSA, 679(1) 17591, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Tientsin, 1900-28', handing-over-charge memo., Tianjin dispatch no. 3,535, acting Commissioner Ferguson to Commissioner Merrill, 16 April 1906.

[159] There are numerous other examples of friction between the Customs and merchants. In 1934, for example, the Pakhoi Commissioner reported that 'the Customs in this locality is not commanding the respect due us from local officials and inhabitants', which he attributed to ignorance and

Discord between the Customs and local communities over the imposition of alien regulations or over the Customs' appropriation of land and property were part of the everyday working world of the Customs.[160] A new type of conflict, however, developed in the 1920s when the growth of anti-imperialist sentiment coupled with the Guomindang rise to power meant that the Customs was often identified as the enemy of Chinese interests and embodiment of the institutionalised imperialist presence in China. Customs work across China was disrupted by the lengthy anti-British boycotts of 1925-26. In Swatow the effects of the anti-foreign strikes on the Customs were particularly trying, depriving the Customs of its unskilled labour force and attempting to force the foreign staff to leave the port. Commissioner Hedgeland reported that during the episode 'at every turn the foreign members of my staff met with the calculated and persistent ill-will of the Swatow Strike Committee', obstructing their efforts to buy fuel and food. Custom house conditions became intolerable when the strike committee refused to allow the 'municipal scavengers' to collect refuse from foreign concerns, meaning that the Customs was forced to dispose of its rubbish in two pits inside its compound, the 'silent fester' of which meant that the staff were 'literally driven out of our club and people living in the Compound found themselves forced to shut their windows'.[161] Even in a usually agreeable port such as Swatow, Customs working conditions could quickly deteriorate in the face of local and national challenges.

Running parallel to anti-Customs strikes was a growth in anti-Customs journalism in local newspapers. Again, Swatow was a hotbed of press hostility directed against the Customs. The exasperated Commissioner reported in 1931 that

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misinformation about the purpose of the Customs amongst officials and merchants. See CSA, 679(1) 14101, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1933-35', semi-official letter no. 660, Commissioner Putnam, Pakhoi, to IG Maze, 11 August 1934. The Customs also came across similar obstacles to the policing of smuggling in certain areas. In 1935, for example, the Tianjin Commissioner reported that the people of northern Shandong were engaged in a thriving smuggling trade, in collusion with local authorities, and were therefore extremely hostile to Customs patrols. In one district the locals were 'practically uncontrollable' and the Customs was 'deliberately obstructed in the performance of it duties by the local police'. See CSA, 679(1) 17591, 'Handing-over-charge Memoranda, Tientsin, 1900-28', handing-over-charge memo, Commissioner Bos to Commissioner Hilliard, 25 April 1935.

[160] An example of an ongoing dispute over land occurred in the first decade of the twentieth century at Swatow, where local officials and residents argued that the Customs had no claim to the land it occupied and therefore made periodic attempts to repossess it. See CSA, 679(1) 17630, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Swatow, 1900-26', handing-over-charge memo, acting Deputy Commissioner Currie to Commissioner Gilchrist, 17 May 1909.

[161] CSA, 679(1) 17630, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Swatow, 1900-26', Swatow dispatch no. 6,268, handing-over-charge memorandum, Commissioner Hedgeland to Commissioner Klubien, 23 November 1926.

the local press were continually printing slanderous stories decrying his actions. He remarked bitterly that 'none would envy me my present notoriety' and blamed the articles on the fact that the Customs had long been 'in a state of active defence against the Municipality'.[162] Two years earlier the Commissioners at both Ningbo and Kongmoon had also reported that inflammatory diatribes against the Customs were regularly being printed in the local papers. Although trivial pretexts were raised to justify these complaints the foreign character of the Customs was essentially the problem for the writers. Headlines such as 'barbarous foreigner's savage disposition' and defamations of 'Customs Officers who are running dogs of the imperialist, disgraceful to China's sovereignty and who deceive their brethren' were commonplace.[163] Although anti-Customs stories in the press could be easily dismissed in a large and cosmopolitan port such as Shanghai, in smaller ports press agitation could turn the entire Chinese community against the Customs. As resentment towards foreign officials and foreign-run institutions swelled the custom house became an increasingly unpleasant place to work for foreign and Chinese staff alike.

Wartime conditions in the late 1930s and 1940s created an environment which fostered conflict with local populations.[164] As it struggled to maintain its hold on the administration of trade in the face of wartime hardships and difficult working conditions the Customs was resented for its continuing insistence on proper procedures and its attempts to stamp out the burgeoning wartime smuggling trade. In 1936 the Qinhuangdao (Chinwangtao) Commissioner, Morgan, wrote to Maze pleading for a transfer because his ongoing struggle against local smugglers had forced him to 'undergo a long succession of most humiliating experiences, and, in addition, continuous mental strain and worry'. His staff had found themselves unable to suppress the smuggling, perpetuated by violent Japanese and Korean gangs with the connivance of both the Japanese and Chinese military authorities, who regularly attacked Customs officials and taunted them for their inability to make seizures.

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[162] CSA, 679(1) 32370, 'Swatow semi-official, 1931-32', semi-official letter no. 552, Commissioner Fletcher, Swatow, to IG Maze, 30 June 1931.
[163] CSA, 679(1) 31639, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1929', translations of anti-Customs articles in confidential letter, Commissioner Sadoine, Ningbo, to IG Maze, 30 June 1929, and confidential letter, Commissioner Basto, Kongmoon, to IG Maze, 10 July 1929.
[164] In 1943, for example, the Shanghai Commissioner reported friction with the mercantile community in response to the collection of higher tariffs during wartime and urged his staff to act courteously towards the public. CSA, 679(1) 17616, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Shanghai, 1901-48', handing-over-charge memo, Commissioner Oyamada to Commissioner Tanioka, 9 February 1943.

Morgan protested that, 'it was not pleasant to be Commissioner here at that time and to be in a position of such ignominious powerlessness, and to know that newspapers all over China were referring to this state of affairs'.[165] In the wartime period Customs operations in certain districts was increasingly difficult to sustain as it became almost impossible to carry out some of the Service's most basic duties.[166] Furthermore, new challenges arose in the shape of hostility from Japanese communities strengthened by Japan's occupation of parts of China. In 1934, the Tianjin Customs experienced continual problems with the Japanese Young Men's League of North China, a patriotic organisation thought to be connected with the Japanese military. The League took to obstructing Customs examination of Japanese passengers, taking issue with the supposed partial treatment of European passengers, although the Commissioner refuted this accusation and surmised that 'the charge of discrimination is a pretext invented by these young Japanese to make themselves conspicuous'.[167] In areas where Japanese influence dominated, Customs officials needed to be increasingly mindful of antagonising Japanese nationals whilst at the same time attempting to maintain Customs integrity when carrying out their daily work.

It appears that the unsteady equilibrium between acting as foreign nationals and as neutral employees of the Chinese government was difficult, if not impossible, to maintain. The dual identity of foreign Customs men meant that it was difficult to satisfy the demands coming from both sides and they therefore often became targets of resentment from other officials operating in China and from local communities. Their ambiguous position also required Customs men to constantly renegotiate and redefine their own sphere of authority in relation to that of Chinese and foreign officials. Perhaps surprisingly, a large part of antipathy towards the Customs came from foreign consuls. In their position as Chinese government employees Customs Commissioners often betrayed an annoying reluctance to bow to consular authority

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[165] CSA, 679(1) 14102, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1936', personal letter, Commissioner Morgan, Qinhuangdao, to Staff Secretary Hu, 28 January 1936.
[166] The Customs in Chinwangtao and nearby Tianjin were coming under threat of Japanese takeover in 1936. The following year, in fact, the Japanese consul-general began pressuring Nanjing to deposit the Tianjin and Qinhuangdao revenues in the Yokohama Specie Bank, a demand that was conceded to in late 1937. See Clifford, 'Sir Frederick Maze and the Chinese Maritime Customs', p. 22.
[167] CSA, 679(1) 31971, 'Tientsin semi-official, 1934', semi-official letter no. 982, Commissioner Bos, Tianjin, to officiating Inspector General Lawford, 6 June 1934.

and demonstrate an unswerving commitment to furthering foreign interests. Personal prestige was also at stake here as consuls and Commissioners constantly infringed upon each other's concept of the extent of their respective fields of authority over foreign nationals and trade.

Conclusion

In 1864 Hart reminded his staff of their exceptional position in China. Unlike other foreigners in China, he cautioned, the foreign Customs staff 'have accepted certain obligations and responsibilities by becoming, in a sense, the countrymen of the others'.[168] These responsibilities, of neutral service and commitment to furthering China's interests, which grew out of the Customs' singular status, were reiterated to the foreign staff throughout their careers and formed the basis of the Foreign Inspectorate's working philosophy during the century of its existence. Although a specific Service ethos was not systematically cultivated in the staff through formal training, a sense that Customs men were distinct from other foreign communities in China and that they needed to act accordingly was instilled in them throughout their working lives. As such, the foreign staff were encouraged to develop a camaraderie based on their difference from other foreigners and on a commitment to their unique task in China. This sense of duty to the Customs offered reassurance to those placed in trying working environments and helped employees to persevere with their careers through difficult postings.

Undoubtedly, many employees did not subscribe to this ethos of disinterested duty. There were many other more prosaic reasons which made pursuing a Customs career an attractive option. In peacetime and if posted to an amenable port the work was rarely difficult—junior Indoor men were not expected to shoulder a heavy burden of responsibility early on in their careers as were their counterparts in the ICS or Colonial Service. Compared to other employment options in China the Customs, although not the most well-paid or prestigious of jobs, offered a steady career with clear prospects of advancement for Indoor and Outdoor men alike. However, it would have been all the more difficult to bear the periods of isolation in small ports, the entrenched conflicts with local officials and communities, and the hardships of working in occupied China without possessing a loyal sense of duty to the Customs. Those who remained unconvinced of their obligation to the Customs were likely to leave the Service in favour of more attractive careers when working conditions were tough.

Although Indoor work was rarely demanding in the lower ranks, the case of Everhart, touched upon at the beginning of this chapter, shows that simply being in

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[168] *Documents Illustrative*, vol. I, circular no. 8 of 1864, p. 36.

China was often in itself very difficult for the foreign staff. Alienation from the surrounding culture, loneliness and ill-health could hit junior members of staff hard. Foreign employees frequently complained about the Chinese diet, relentless noise, and the lack of recreation; such seemingly insignificant grievances could make acclimatisation extremely challenging. These problems were also experienced by Chinese employees. In 1949, for example, a Chinese Assistant, Li Hsung Han, wrote to Little asking for a transfer from Zhanjiang (Tsamkong) on the Leizhou (Luichow) peninsula to either Kowloon or Taiwan, explaining that; 'This is a foreign place to me. I do not speak the native tongue. In fact, I feel that I am in a place which is more foreign to me than if I were in any part of your country'.[169] This sense of estrangement from the surrounding environment was, however, heightened and compounded in the case of the foreign staff by immense cultural differences, by their whiteness, and by their status as extraterritorialised foreigners. Such feelings of alienation were presumably common to most white men and women living on the edges of empire or stationed in remote postings. The Customs example sheds light on how the difference and distance which colonists cultivated between themselves and colonised peoples and cultures did not only serve to enhance 'white superiority'; it also gave rise to deep feelings demoralising isolation and of unease about their place in the colonial world.

The anomalous status of the Customs, as a foreign-run branch of the Chinese government, and its staff also generated numerous problems and conflicts. Unlike the DO of colonial civil services, who had unambiguous loyalties to the Crown and to the country in which he worked, the allegiances of Customs men were less clear-cut. Although their primary obligation was expected to lie with the Customs Service, national loyalties also ran strong in the foreign staff. Mediating between foreign and Chinese interests was not an easy job for senior Customs men. The Customs philosophy of disinterested service, moreover, was often difficult to uphold in practice. In the course of their working lives Customs men became caught up in local and national political power games and needed to negotiate a range of different loyalties, all of which made championing the Customs dictum of strict neutrality intensely difficult. As we shall see in the following chapter, the loyalties of the foreign staff were never entirely watertight.

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[169] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.13, 'IG correspondence with Customs Commissioners and staff, May-Dec 1949', letter from Li Hsung Han to Little, 16 July 1949.

Chapter Three

A Model of Honesty?: Discipline, Reward and Malpractice

W. Somerset Maugham's travel book, *The Gentleman in the Parlour* (first published in 1930), contains a portrait of a corrupt foreign Customs official, named Grosely in the text, apparently a former acquaintance from Maugham's days at medical school in London whom he stumbled across whilst travelling in Vietnam (Tonkin). Since their last meeting some decades previously 'Grosely' had evidently evolved into a slippery character, given to opium-smoking and engineering shady business deals. It emerged that previous to his arrival in Haiphong Grosely had worked for twenty years in the Outdoor Staff of the Chinese Customs Service, during which time he had amassed a fortune through utterly dishonest means. Maugham reported himself appalled by his acquaintance's confession:

> It was with a sort of horror that I had listened to Grosely, telling me of those twenty years he had spent in China. He had made money, I do not know how much, but from the way he talked I should think something between fifteen and twenty thousand pounds, and for a tide-waiter it was a fortune. He could not have come by it honestly, and little as I knew of the details of his trade, by his sudden reticences, by his leers and hints, I guessed that there was no base transaction that, if it was made worth his while, he jibbed at.[1]

Furthermore, although 'Grosely's' superiors suspected him of conducting underhand deals and accepting bribes, they were never able to conclusively prove his malpractices. Now that 'Grosely' had squandered his ill-gotten gains on opium and was living in squalor, he looked back nostalgically to his prosperous years as a Tidewaiter.

No one of the name of Grosely is recorded as having worked for the Customs, yet Maugham's portrait of a corrupt Customs official is evidently based on a real acquaintance. His allusions to the prevalence of corruption in the foreign staff are, given Maugham's fondness for lampooning foreign society in China, most likely exaggerated. Yet his story does expose a potential truth up to a point, one which is strikingly at odds with portrayals of the Foreign Inspectorate as an incorruptible force for good in Customs histories. Robert Ronald Campbell, for example, in the preface to his biography of his father, James Duncan Campbell—who presided over the

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[1] W. Somerset Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour* (first published 1930), in *The Travel Books of W. Somerset Maugham* (London, 1955), p. 161.

London Office for over thirty-five years—described what he considered to be the Foreign Inspectorate's central achievement in glowing terms:

> In a vast country... notorious for the bribery and corruption of the official classes, it [the Customs Service] shone out incorruptible like a beacon of pure light until, as port after port was opened to foreign trade and its sphere of activities gradually increased, there were few places where you could not truthfully say, "Here the Customs Service did good".[2]

Campbell's fervent praise of the Customs' reforming mission highlights a central theme in writing about the Customs Service. Fairbank, too, argued that the Foreign Inspectorate boasted many achievements, 'but above all, the Customs set a standard of incorrupt public service and of devotion to the central administration which has been of incalculable value to the Chinese government of the twentieth century'.[3] In Chinese government departments, so the argument went, bribery and dishonesty were endemic. Considering the treaty obligations of both the foreign powers and China after 1842 to collect and remit the correct duties on foreign trade, the corruptness and inefficiency of the Chinese customs administration was deemed unacceptable.

This picture of pervasive official corruption was more often than not correct. Local government under the Qing was headed by a succession of inexperienced magistrates, meaning that the long-serving clerks in the magistrate's office were easily able to manipulate government affairs, extorting bribes and defrauding tax revenues for personal gain in the process.[4] Corrupt practices amongst Chinese officials and clerks were extremely complex and, moreover, had 'deep roots in the very structure of imperial rule', meaning that successive attempts at reform failed to eliminate them.[5] Furthermore, on a local level bribery was *not* viewed by most people as a social problem. Consequently, Henry Lethbridge argues that 'it was almost impossible to eradicate bribery, the commonest species of corruption in Hong Kong, simply because all parties involved in this dyadic relationship, the giver and taker, normally got what they wanted and no one was aggrieved'.[6] However, supporters of

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[2] Campbell, *James Duncan Campbell,* p. xvii.
[3] Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy,* p.462.
[4] See Tung-Tsu Ch'u, *Local Government in China under the Ch'ing* (Stanford CA, 1962), pp. 36-55. Government runners were also notoriously corrupt and made a habit of extorting bribes from the public (pp. 56-73).
[5] See, for example, Madeleine Zelin on the eighteenth-century imperial investigation into the massive tax arrears in Jiangsu, Jiangxi and Anhui provinces; *The Magistrate's Tael: Rationalizing Fiscal Reform in Eighteenth-Century Ch'ing China* (Berkeley CA, 1984), Chapter Six, 'Obstacles to Reform: Low-Level Corruption and the Kiangnan Tax-Clearance Case', pp. 220-63. Quotation from p. 262.
[6] Henry J. Lethbridge, *Hong Kong: Stability and Change* (Hong Kong, 1978), p. 227. Lethbridge goes further by arguing that incidents of corruption increased in a colonial setting, such as Hong Kong,

the foreign presence in China after 1842—and especially the British presence—highlighted corruption as an intrinsic problem of Chinese officialdom.

Nineteenth-century Western judgements on the destructive nature of Chinese bureaucratic corruption must be viewed in the context of British civil service reforms in the same era. In the period 1780-1830 the prevalence of 'old corruption' in the British political system, in the form of over-taxation, electoral bribery and above all political patronage, had come under attack from many quarters.[7] Such practices, the critics argued, could only lead to inefficiency and the sacrifice of sound administration to politics.[8] These criticisms prompted the introduction of limited competition for entrance to the civil service in 1855, a move which signalled 'a compromise between the older pattern of influence, and the newer concept of efficiency', and ultimately led to the inauguration of open competition in 1870.[9] This combined with an accompanying series of economic reforms meant that Britain began to see itself as a champion of disinterested and corruption-free government after the mid-nineteenth century.

In reality, remnants of the old system persisted in British politics until as late as 1914, yet the nineteenth-century climate of political reform inevitably led to unfavourable comparisons between China and Britain after 1842.[10] The Foreign Inspectorate, in particular—charged, as it was, with reforming and moulding an entire Chinese fiscal institution—seized upon these new concepts of efficient and politically disinterested government which had recently rose to prominence in Britain and sought to implement them in the Chinese customs administration. Successive IGs, starting with Hart, zealously sought to implement these principles, styling the Foreign Inspectorate as an exemplary administrative service which was striving to purge the Customs of the corruption that was rife in other government departments. Moulding an honest and professional service went hand-in-hand, in the Inspectorate's eyes, with the creation of a quintessentially British bureaucratic apparatus on Chinese soil.

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because they provided a means by which local populations could 'neutralise' the effect of the various rules and regulations imposed upon them by an alien bureaucracy (p. 229).

[7] See Philip Harling, *The Waning of 'Old Corruption': The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain, 1779-1846* (Oxford, 1996).

[8] Although patronage *did* have its advantages, as J. M. Bourne argues: *Patronage and Society in Nineteenth-Century England* (London, 1986).

[9] Henry Parris, *Constitutional Bureaucracy: The Development of British Central Administration Since the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1969), p. 72.

[10] For the persistence of patronage and corruption in the British political system see H. J. Hanham, 'Political Patronage at the Treasury, 1870-1912', *Historical Journal*, vol. III, no. 1 (1960), pp. 75-84. Also, G. R. Searle, *Corruption in British Politics, 1895-1930* (Oxford, 1987).

By the twentieth-century the eradication of endemic corruption had come to be viewed by the Inspectorate as one of its foremost achievements. Maze's 1936 circular, in response to a Guanwushu dispatch aimed at eradicating official corruption throughout all government departments, went so far as to declare:

> The Customs Service, I am happy to be able to state, has always enjoyed a high reputation for administrative honesty and integrity, even though individual cases of misdemeanour of comparatively minor importance have come to light occasionally... A high standard of honesty is, in fact, the principal foundation upon which the Service has been built up, and the elimination of all forms of corruption has been, and will continue to be, relentlessly pursued.[11]

Clearly honesty was the Service's watchword. Implicit in this mission was the assumption that the integrity of the Service was nurtured and guided by a cohort of foreign staff, whose upright character and knowledge of Western bureaucratic principles had transformed the customs administration.

This chapter will assess how successful the Foreign Inspectorate was in moulding a cadre of employees committed to high standards of professional integrity. Firstly, I will examine in more detail the Customs' depiction of itself as a model of honesty, assessing the different types of misconduct as defined by the Inspectorate and its methods of maintaining discipline amongst staff. Secondly, I will assess the benefits and rewards offered to foreign employees and whether these provided incentive enough for upholding good conduct. Lastly, I will examine transgressions from this honest ideal perpetrated by the foreign staff—those occasional 'cases of misdemeanour of comparatively minor importance' referred to in Maze's 1936 circular—and the reaction they provoked from the Inspectorate.

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[11] CSA, 679(1) 16100, 'Instructions regarding conduct and discipline of Customs Staff', IG circular no. 9,665, 24 April 1936.

1) Discipline and the Customs model

This elevated view of Western bureaucracy and the civilising influence of foreign administrators was not confined to the Chinese Customs Service. It is usually assumed that Europeans working in colonial administrative services formed tightly-knit cohorts dedicated to public duty and honest conduct. Ronald Hyam, for example, has argued that 'the empire held together through a sense of loyalty among the administrators to certain standards' rather than through the powers of central administration.[12] However, the assumption that the employees of colonial services formed a loyal and honest corps of men at the heart of colonial authority structures ignores the differences in motivations, status and aims amongst the employees of these institutions—and amongst Westerners in the empire world more broadly—which meant that some groups and individuals were less than enthusiastic about preserving the standards of colonial government.[13] The elite administrators of the ICS, committed from the outset to a lifelong career in colonial administration, may well have been virtually incorruptible. Badly paid colonial policemen and men in other occupations of a comparable status, on the other hand, had fewer incentives to uphold their service's standards of good conduct and often had less of a career or reputation to defend. As Christopher Munn has observed with reference to Hong Kong's colonial administration, 'Europeans needed no lessons in corruption from "the Asiatic genius"'.[14]

In this sense, the foreign staff of the Chinese Customs Service presents a pertinent case study through which to reassess this commonly-held view of the incorruptibility of the staff of overseas services. The Customs also employed an elite administrative corps alongside the low-status or low-skilled workers of the 'outdoor' branches, and there were huge disparities between how each branch viewed their working responsibilities. Furthermore, this case study can shed more light on how colonial societies, and particularly foreign communities on the peripheries of empire,

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[12] Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A study of Empire and Expansion,* (Basingstoke, third edition 2003), p. 308.
[13] See Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power,* Chapter Two, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule', pp. 22-40.
[14] Christopher Munn, *Anglo-China: Chinese People and British Rule, 1841-80* (Richmond, 2001), p. 291. Henry Lethbridge has also shown that the lower levels of colonial government in Hong Kong were 'honeycombed with corruption'; *Hong Kong: Stability and Change,* Chapter Nine, 'The Emergence of Bureaucratic Corruption as a Social Problem in Hong Kong', pp. 221-9.

were regulated and policed. Lacking the authority structures of formal colonial government, foreign societies in informal empire mainly kept their reprobates in check through recourse to consular authority. In the case of China, for example, Barbara Brooks has shown how Japanese consuls worked to constrain the behaviour of Japanese nationals and Eileen Scully has similarly described how recourse was made to the US state, in the form of the US District Court, in policing the undesirable elements of American treaty port society.[15] Services such as the Customs, which were often intensely concerned with safeguarding their reputations, regulated staff behaviour to ensure that their employees conformed to the correct standards. Perhaps most importantly, moreover, misconduct in the Customs and the fates of those who transgressed bring to light an alternative face of colonialism—one which often goes unacknowledged—where white society was fraught with personal failures and colonial lives gone awry.

In the case of the Customs Service reputation was doubly important. One of the principal ways in which the Inspectorate sought to legitimise its existence—and the presence of an expensive foreign staff on the Chinese government's payroll—was through its claim to be eradicating corruption from the customs administration and transforming the Service into a model example of institutional efficiency in the process. Any evidence of transgressions on the part of the foreign staff, in the form of misconduct or malpractice, threatened to de-legitimise the Inspectorate's existence. Consequently, employees were periodically warned of the misdeeds which would land them in trouble. In 1869, for example, Hart circulated a list of punishable offences amongst the staff, comprising:

> Slovenliness, Want of Punctuality, Negligence, Incompetence, Quarrelsomeness, Insubordination, Absence without leave, Unauthorised publication of Office matters, Prosecution for any cause civil or criminal, Malversation, Peculation, Bribery, Fraud, Engaging in Trade, Insobriety, Gross Immorality.[16]

Four broad categories of offences can be discerned here. Firstly, general misconduct in the form of professional laxness or irresponsible behaviour was always a common problem. Incidents of malpractice, in the form of fraud or taking bribes, were less widespread but cases were nonetheless detected at regular intervals. Thirdly, on- or off-duty conduct which threatened to disgrace the Service's good name, such as insobriety or acts that the Inspectorate defined as 'gross immorality', merited

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[15] Brooks, *Japan's Imperial Diplomacy*, pp. 85-92; Scully, *Bargaining with the State from Afar*.
[16] CSA, 679(1) 26890, 'IG's circulars, vol. 1, first series, 1861-75', circular no. 25 of 1869 (first series), 'Port requirements and reorganisation', 1 November 1869.

disciplinary action. Fourthly, disobedience or defiance of authority also resulted in punishment. The corresponding list of punishments ranged from private or public censure to suspension, demotion or dismissal.[17] Although the Commissioner was invested with the power to censure or to suspend those charged with misconduct, in serious cases a 'court of enquiry' composed of three senior members of staff was convened to investigate the case. The image the Customs projected is one of a Service in which misconduct was taken very seriously indeed.

Table 3.1- **Aggregate dismissals and discharges amongst the foreign staff, 1854-1950**

		Dismissals		Discharges	
Rank on appointment	*Total number appointed*	*Total*	*Percentage of staff appointed**	*Total*	*Percentage of staff appointed**
Assistants/Clerks	1,188	46	4%	92	8%
Watchers/Tidewaiters	5,983	657	11%	1,002	17%
Lightkeepers	528	50	9%	127	24%

Source- Service lists database of employees withdrawn from service.

* This percentage is calculated against the total number of foreign employees initially appointed to each specified rank.

Yet, in spite of these strict disciplinary procedures and the pride which the Inspectorate took in the honesty of its staff, a significant number of men *were* dismissed for breaking the Customs rules each year. As *table 3.1* shows, the vast majority of dismissals were meted out to the Outdoor Staff, closely followed by the Lights Staff; eleven percent of men initially appointed to the Outdoor Staff as Watchers or Tidewaiters and nine percent of those appointed to the Lightkeeper ranks were eventually dismissed. Furthermore, although dismissal rates were much lower in the Indoor Staff, not all Assistants were models of good conduct; the careers of four percent of those initially appointed as Clerks or Assistants ended with dismissal. Moreover, as *table 3.1* shows, the possible extent of staff misconduct and malpractice appears much larger when we consider the numbers *discharged* from service. A discharge did not always mean that an employee had been the recipient of disciplinary action—men could, for example, be discharged as a result of staff cutbacks—yet when employment was terminated for less serious offences, such as incompetence or general misconduct, it was usually recorded as a discharge. Furthermore, in many malpractice cases the Inspectorate often conceded to record the guilty party's dismissal as a discharge to lessen the damage done to his future career prospects.

[17] Demotion could mean that an employee's name was placed at the bottom of a sub-division or class, meaning that he was last in line for promotion, or that the employee was demoted to a lower class.

Despite the Inspectorate's claims to be cleansing the Customs of the corruption endemic in Chinese bureaucracy through the example of the foreign staff, foreign employees evidently did not provide a model of good behaviour for their Chinese colleagues to follow.

In fact, as *table 3.2* shows, in the nineteenth century the proportion of foreign employees dismissed each year was consistently higher than that of the Chinese staff, hovering between eight and fifteen per cent of all foreign withdrawals. In the same period, dismissals of Chinese staff did not rise above ten per cent of all Chinese withdrawals and in many years there were no dismissals at all. Relatively high numbers of both foreign and Chinese staff were *discharged* during the nineteenth century, yet the combined total of dismissals and discharges was usually higher for the foreign staff, accounting for between twenty-eight and forty-two percent of all foreign withdrawals. This speaks partly of potentially high levels of misconduct in the foreign staff and also of the large numbers of incompetent and unsatisfactory foreign employees appointed in the early decades of the Service—'bad hats', as Hart labelled them[18]—who later needed to be eliminated from the Customs ranks.

The decade 1900-09 turned this situation on its head when the average proportion of annual Chinese dismissals and discharges rapidly rose above the levels of foreign dismissals and discharges. In large part this was an unexpected by-product of the Inspectorate's growing responsibilities in this period. Between 1896 and 1911 the Imperial Post Office and its staff was placed under the Foreign Inspectorate's sphere of jurisdiction, and from 1901 the Inspectorate assumed control of nineteen Native Customs stations. The high proportion of dismissals and discharges during this period could, therefore, be explained by the Inspectorate's takeover of bureaucracies which already harboured high levels of corruption amongst their ranks. Between 1896 and 1910 1,252 clerks joined the Post Office and a further 4,849 recruits were appointed to other branches, causing staff numbers to increase dramatically from 2,925 employees recorded as working for the Service on 31 December 1896 to 7,621 on 31 December 1910.[19] Such a large and rapid increase in staff numbers inevitably led to the recruitment of many unsatisfactory employees who were soon dismissed or discharged.

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[18] Fairbank *et al* (eds.) *Robert Hart and China's Modernization*, Hart's journal entry for 18 March 1864, p. 73.

[19] Figures derived from service lists database of employees withdrawn from service.

***Table 3.2*- Five year rolling averages of withdrawals from service, 1860-1941 (percentage against total Chinese/foreign withdrawals in parentheses)**

	Chinese withdrawals			Foreign withdrawals		
Date	Total withdrawals	Dismissed	Discharged	Total withdrawals	Dismissed	Discharged
1860	0	0	0	48	0	19 (40%)
1861	0	0	0	73	0	29 (40%)
1862	0	0	0	84	0	34 (40%)
1863	0	0	0	86	0	33 (38%)
1864	0	0	0	85	0	30 (35%)
1865	0	0	0	75	0	27 (36%)
1866	0	0	0	56	0	18 (32%)
1867	0	0	0	46	0	15 (33%)
1868	0	0	0	44	0	16 (36%)
1869	0	0	0	38	0	14 (37%)
1870	0	0	0	38	0	14 (36%)
1871	0	0	0	40	0	14 (35%)
1872	0	0	0	41	0	13 (32%)
1873	0	0	0	40	0	11 (28%)
1874	0	0	0	46	2 (4%)	13 (28%)
1875	0	0	0	51	5 (10%)	13 (25%)
1876	1	0	0	55	5 (9%)	13 (23%)
1877	5	0	1 (20%)	68	7 (10%)	22 (32%)
1878	8	0	2 (25%)	70	7 (10%)	22 (31%)
1879	10	0	2 (20%)	68	7 (10%)	20 (29%)
1880	14	1 (7%)	4 (29%)	67	5 (7%)	21 (31%)
1881	16	0	5 (31%)	71	6 (8%)	24 (34%)
1882	15	0	3 (20%)	58	5 (9%)	15 (26%)
1883	15	1 (7%)	3 (20%)	57	6 (11%)	14 (25%)
1884	16	1 (7%)	3 (19%)	59	5 (8%)	16 (27%)
1885	20	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	59	6 (10%)	16 (27%)
1886	20	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	59	6 (10%)	15 (25%)
1887	25	2 (8%)	5 (20%)	63	6 (10%)	15 (24%)
1888	29	1 (3%)	6 (21%)	71	8 (11%)	18 (25%)
1889	30	1 (3%)	7 (23%)	75	8 (11%)	18 (24%)
1890	28	0	7 (25%)	83	8 (10%)	19 (23%)
1891	29	0	8 (28%)	83	8 (10%)	17 (20%)
1892	29	0	7 (24%)	87	8 (9%)	18 (21%)
1893	29	0	9 (31%)	88	8 (9%)	17 (19%)
1894	32	0	10 (31%)	96	9 (9%)	16 (17%)
1895	36	1 (3%)	10 (28%)	118	13 (11%)	20 (17%)
1896	38	1 (3%)	10 (26%)	141	17 (12%)	23 (16%)
1897	39	2 (5%)	9 (23%)	156	21 (13%)	24 (15%)
1898	37	3 (8%)	7 (19%)	169	25 (15%)	26 (15%)
1899	39	3 (8%)	8 (21%)	172	23 (13%)	29 (17%)
1900	45	4 (9%)	9 (20%)	176	22 (13%)	29 (16%)
1901	61	6 (10%)	12 (20%)	188	21 (11%)	31 (16%)
1902	96	12 (13%)	22 (23%)	206	21 (10%)	37 (18%)
1903	136	17 (13%)	32 (24%)	219	19 (9%)	41 (19%)
1904	175	23 (13%)	43 (25%)	235	22 (9%)	42 (18%)
1905	207	29 (14%)	50 (24%)	233	24 (10%)	42 (18%)
1906	239	35 (15%)	63 (26%)	214	21 (10%)	40 (19%)
1907	241	37 (15%)	63 (26%)	192	17 (9%)	35 (18%)
1908	224	35 (16%)	56 (25%)	187	19 (10%)	29 (15%)
1909	188	28 (15%)	45 (24%)	176	18 (10%)	28 (16%)

1910	159	20 (13%)	39 (25%)		156	14 (9%)	24 (15%)
1911	116	12 (7%)	23 (20%)		161	16 (10%)	23 (14%)
1912	81	5 (6%)	14 (17%)		192	17 (9%)	22 (11%)
1913	64	1 (2%)	11 (17%)		192	16 (8%)	23 (12%)
1914	59	1 (2%)	10 (17%)		192	14 (7%)	21 (11%)
1915	52	2 (4%)	8 (15%)		223	15 (7%)	21 (9%)
1916	48	1 (2%)	6 (13%)		210	13 (6%)	18 (9%)
1917	49	1 (2%)	5 (10%)		171	13 (8%)	16 (9%)
1918	52	1 (2%)	6 (12%)		159	12 (8%)	15 (9%)
1919	66	3 (5%)	9 (14%)		162	13 (8%)	17 (10%)
1920	71	3 (4%)	10 (14%)		137	15 (11%)	19 (14%)
1921	76	5 (7%)	15 (20%)		143	17 (12%)	19 (13%)
1922	82	8 (10%)	15 (18%)		149	19 (12%)	18 (12%)
1923	84	9 (11%)	15 (18%)		144	19 (13%)	18 (13%)
1924	77	8 (10%)	14 (18%)		127	19 (15%)	14 (11%)
1925	76	8 (11%)	11 (14%)		120	15 (13%)	11 (9%)
1926	74	7 (9%)	8 (11%)		103	11 (11%)	8 (8%)
1927	78	6 (8%)	8 (10%)		94	9 (10%)	6 (6%)
1928	89	10 (11%)	6 (7%)		93	7 (8%)	4 (4%)
1929	90	10 (11%)	7 (8%)		88	5 (6%)	4 (5%)
1930	118	9 (8%)	10 (8%)		78	5 (6%)	4 (5%)
1931	133	14 (11%)	9 (7%)		99	25 (25%)	4 (4%)
1932	130	12 (9%)	9 (7%)		94	24 (26%)	4 (5%)
1933	119	8 (7%)	9 (7%)		81	23 (28%)	4 (5%)
1934	119	7 (6%)	7 (6%)		75	22 (29%)	3 (4%)
1935	96	8 (8%)	6 (6%)		73	22 (30%)	2 (3%)
1936	92	6 (7%)	7 (8%)		53	2 (4%)	2 (4%)
1937	91	6 (7%)	7 (8%)		55	1 (2%)	3 (5%)
1938	92	6 (7%)	8 (9%)		60	2 (3%)	2 (3%)
1939	88	7 (8%)	7 (8%)		109	2 (2%)	2 (2%)
1940	113	7 (6%)	5 (4%)		115	1 (1%)	2 (2%)
1941	150	4 (3%)	4 (3%)		136	1 (1%)	2 (1%)

Source- Service lists database of employees withdrawn from Service[20]

The high levels of dismissals and discharges during this decade could, of course, also be a testimony to just how successful the Inspectorate was at discovering incidents of misconduct or malpractice and punishing the individuals involved, in addition to indicating high levels of misconduct and malpractice amongst the staff. Always alert to the ill-effects of misconduct on the Service's good name, and its potential to de-legitimise the Foreign Inspectorate's existence, the Customs appears to have been more ruthless than other services in punishing staff misdemeanours. In the UK Customs, for example, only between three and twelve percent of the total annual number of disciplinary cases ended with dismissal 1896-1903, and in some years there were no dismissals whatsoever.[21] Moreover, in 1900 only four UK Customs

[20] Accurate data for the period 1942-9 is unavailable.
[21] TNA, CUST 40/32, 'Register of offences, 1899-1903'.

employees were dismissed out of a total staff of 4,827 and in 1903 only three were dismissed from amongst a total of 5,233 established employees.[22]

After the Inspectorate relinquished control of the Post Office in 1911 Chinese dismissals and withdrawals first plummeted and then proceeded to rise steadily amongst both the foreign and Chinese staffs until the mid-1920s. The new political climate ushered in by the Nationalist ascendancy in 1927 gave rise to renewed and amplified anxiety about corruption levels in the Service. Although levels of dismissals and discharges dropped in the late 1920s, this was not, as the IG himself admitted, an indication of lower levels of misconduct but rather a result of the Inspectorate's inability to police the conduct of its staff in a period of political upheaval. The disruption caused by the Guomindang takeover of China in the late 1920s incited many employees to profit from this instability through fraud and extortion. A 1929 circular lamented that, 'during the latter years of the Revolution the ancient discipline of the Service has been in some instances necessarily relaxed, and efficiency has suffered thereby', and went on to warn staff that misdemeanours would be not be tolerated in the future.[23] The following year Maze issued another concerned circular on the same topic:

> I regret to state that bribery and corruption amongst the Staff appear to be on the increase, the dismissal of certain employees not having had the desired effect of stamping out this evil. I wish, therefore, to take this opportunity of warning the Staff that in future in all such cases the individuals implicated, whether foreign or Chinese, will be prosecuted with all the rigour of the law.[24]

As the Customs came under increasing scrutiny from the new, vociferously anti-imperialist Nationalist government, which had, moreover, vowed to eliminate corruption from government departments, the Foreign Inspectorate urgently needed to defend its image as a model of efficiency and honesty to ensure its continued existence. In order to survive in the new political environment the Inspectorate needed to be seen to be taking action, particularly against corruption in the foreign staff. As a result, annual dismissals of foreign employees rose to between twenty-five and thirty per cent of all foreign withdrawals between 1931 and 1935.

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[22] TNA, CUST 39/220, 'List of the officers and clerks in Her Majesty's Customs, 1900', and CUST 39/221, 'List of the officers and clerks in His Majesty's Customs, 1903'.
[23] CSA, 679(1) 16100, 'Instructions regarding conduct and discipline of Customs Staff, 1929-49', IG circular no. 3,899 (second series), 22 April 1929,
[24] CSA, 679(1) 26909, 'Inspector General's circulars, vol. 19, second series, nos. 3,801-4,100, 1928-30', IG circular no. 4,094 (second series), 27 June 1930.

The Inspectorate's inability to effectively police staff conduct in the face of difficult wartime conditions meant that dismissal and discharge rates fell to an all time low in the late 1930s and 1940s. Wartime deprivations and turmoil produced an ideal environment in which corruption could thrive, yet the Inspectorate had more pressing matters to deal with during this difficult period.[25] L. K. Little, after his appointment to the post of IG in 1943, constantly expressed his worries about the corruption which was becoming endemic in the 1940s Customs staff. Although he professed to be sympathetic to the plight of employees who had endured the difficult living conditions and material hardships of wartime, in a 1945 circular Little warned that 'greed, dishonesty and immorality—the evil off-spring of inflation—must be ruthlessly dealt with whenever they appear in the Customs Service'. Moreover, he reiterated his predecessors' dogma of the great importance attached to honest conduct in the Service:

> The basis of the Customs organization is the personal honesty of the individual employee. If it were understood that the Inspector General and his Commissioners were willing to shut the eye to malpractice, this basis would crumble, and dishonesty and corruption would spread like a cancer throughout the Service. Speaking for myself, I should not care to remain as head of a Service in which corruption was tolerated—even in the slightest degree.[26]

In the post-war period, however, the Customs was operating in a fundamentally changed situation. Whereas the Customs in previous years had developed along quasi-diplomatic lines, playing a key role on the international political scene in China, by 1945 it was acting as little more than a revenue-collecting organisation. The IG's powers of appointment and dismissal had, moreover, been severely curtailed by the Nationalists. Much to Little's frustration, then, in the postwar period the Inspectorate simply did not possess the means to effectively combat growing levels of malpractice.

Little's belief that the operation of the Service rested upon the 'personal honesty of the individual' expressed a conviction which lay at the core of the Foreign Inspectorate's self-image. In this view, the integrity of the Customs Staff rendered the Foreign Inspectorate a model service, one which had successfully eradicated the corruption rife in Chinese institutions and government through a combination of Western bureaucratic principles and a morally-upright foreign staff. The nineteenth-century Customs Service, which thrived under Hart's iron hand, exemplified this ideal. As political instability, war and revolution in the twentieth century made policing

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[25] See Wasserstein, *Secret War in Shanghai,* for a description of the social and political conditions in wartime Shanghai's foreign communities and the seditious activities which accompanied them.
[26] CSA, 679(1) 16100, 'Instructions regarding conduct and discipline of Customs Staff, 1929-49', IG circular letter, Little to K. T. Ting (Deputy IG and Shanghai Commissioner), 4 October 1945.

malpractice and misconduct increasingly difficult, Maze and Little looked back to the nineteenth century nostalgically—and erroneously—as a golden age of scrupulous honesty in the Service. At all times the Customs demonstrated an awareness of its public reputation, and was subsequently anxious to project a virtuous image of its staff. Especially from the late 1920s, when the legitimacy of the Foreign Inspectorate was increasingly challenged, an assurance of the model conduct of the foreign staff was one of the means by which its continued existence could be justified.

2) Reward and incentives

Misconduct can be partly explained by the incentives for good behaviour provided by the Inspectorate—or lack of them—and as such it is pertinent first to consider the rewards and benefits offered to Customs employees. As we have seen, the Inspectorate sought to inculcate in its staff a commitment to Customs integrity and upright conduct. The nurturing of *esprit de corps* amongst the staff, however, had its limits as an incentive for good conduct and loyalty to the Inspectorate if it was unaccompanied by material benefits. This section will, therefore, examine the systems of rewards, allowances and benefits available to the foreign staff, and their role in either encouraging discipline or provoking discontent.

The most consistent and obvious method of rewarding staff was through their monthly pay. Satisfaction with rates of pay and the prospect of future pay rises was essential to sustaining staff morale and goodwill towards the Inspectorate. The Indoor Staff had little cause for complaint in this respect. Pay was reasonably competitive, with a monthly starting salary of Hk. Tls. 75 per month for a Fourth Assistant B, the lowest foreign rank in the Indoor Staff, around 1880.[27] Indoor Staff salaries, although lower than those offered by more prestigious overseas services such as the ICS, compared very favourably with similar employment options in Britain; a Fourth Assistant B entering the Service in the late nineteenth-century received the equivalent of a £400 salary—plus free accommodation or a rent allowance—as compared with £250 for a new recruit to the British Civil Service.[28] With nine different ranks of Assistants in existence at this date, and a pay rise of Hk. Tls. 25 with each promotion, Indoor men were well aware of the potential for a long and financially secure career in the Service (*table 3.3*). If an Indoor man persevered to the rank of Commissioner he could expect to live very comfortably in China, with monthly salaries ranging from Hk. Tls. 400 to Hk. Tls. 700. As Hart observed in response to staff calls for a pension in 1869; 'The pay issued to all classes is fairly liberal, and some of the higher positions may properly be considered prizes; but the life is not the life of mercantile

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[27] The Haikuan Tael (Hk. Tl.) was the form of currency, based on a weight of silver, used by the Customs Service in its transactions.
[28] Campbell, *James Duncan Campbell*, p. 30.

speculation—neither is it the life of an official in a badly paid service, which after long years provides scanty pensions'.[29]

Outdoor Staff pay was, however, conspicuously lower from the outset. A Third Class Tidewaiter entering the Customs in 1880 received Hk. Tls. 50 per month, one third less than his Indoor counterparts (*table 3.4*). The salary for the most senior Tidewaiter rank was only Hk. Tls. 70, still lower than the entry-level pay for the Indoor Staff. There were, moreover, considerably fewer prospects for promotion in the nineteenth-century Outdoor Staff, with only three Tidewaiter ranks, three Examiner ranks and two Tidesurveyor ranks, and each promotion through the junior ranks only yielded Hk. Tls. 10 pay rise (*table 3.4*). The Lights Staff fared even worse; a Fourth Class Lightkeeper in 1880 received just Hk. Tls. 20 per month and pay increased by only Hk. Tls. 10 with each promotion (*table 3.6*). The Coast Staff, too, received poor recompense for their work considering that all recruits to this branch were required to have several years experience at sea before being eligible for an appointment (*table 3.5*). Of all the 'outdoor' branches, only the engineers of the Marine Department received pay equivalent to or above that of the senior ranks of the Indoor Staff (*table 3.6*). As technically trained men who were hard to find in China skilled Marine employees were evidently much more highly valued by the Inspectorate than their untrained colleagues in the Outdoor and Lights Staff. This pattern of high pay for the Indoor Staff and low pay and prospects for the 'outdoor' branches is also apparent in the Service-wide overhaul of salaries in 1898. Senior Outdoor men fared well under the new pay scales, yet whereas the annual salary of an Indoor man doubled in 1898, Tidewaiter salaries only increased by just over one third (*tables 3.3* and *3.4*), serving to widen the already large gap between Indoor and Outdoor pay.

Salaries are, therefore, a useful gauge of the value placed on each body of staff by the Inspectorate and of the standard rate of pay afforded to certain types of work in China. Highly-skilled employees such as engineers, who were invaluable to the Marine Department's work and difficult to replace, were rewarded with high pay. Similarly, in order to attract suitable candidates to the Indoor Staff, the Customs' administrative elite, the Inspectorate needed to provide competitive salaries and firm prospects for advancement. The Outdoor Staff and the Lights Staff, whose ranks

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[29] *Documents Illustrative*, vol. I, circular no. 25 of 1869, 'Service re-organization, regulations, and explanations', p. 157.

were largely filled with unskilled employees, were evidently little valued by the Service. Despite their essential role in Customs work, Outdoor Staff and Lights Staff pay was consistently lower than that offered to other branches and provided few possibilities for a long Service career. Men in the unskilled 'outdoor' branches were easily replaceable, and the Inspectorate considered it preferable to replace and train new recruits than pay well and retain seasoned employees.

***Table 3.3*- Foreign Indoor Staff rates of pay in *Haikuan Taels*[30]**

Rank/Date	c. 1880		c. 1898	
	Monthly pay	*Annual pay*	*Monthly pay**	*Annual pay*
Fourth Assistant B	75	900	75 + 75	1,800
Fourth Assistant A	100	1,200	100 + 100	2,400
Third Assistant B	125	1,500	125 + 125	3,000
Third Assistant A	150	1,800	150 + 150	3,600
Second Assistant B	175	2,100	175 + 175	4,200
Second Assistant A	200	2,400	200 + 200	3,800
First Assistant B	225	2,700	225 + 225	4,400
First Assistant A	250	3,000	250 + 250	5,000
Chief Assistant	300	3,600	300 + 300	7,200
Dep. Commissioner	300	3,600	300 + 300	7,200
Commissioner	c. 400-700	4,800-8,400	400-750 + 400-750	9,500- 18,000

* The first amount was issued monthly and the second amount multiplied by three was issued quarterly.

***Table 3.4*- Foreign Outdoor Staff rates of pay in *Haikuan Taels*[31]**

Rank/Date	c. 1880		1898		1916	
	Monthly pay	*Annual pay*	*Monthly pay**	*Annual pay*	*Monthly pay*	*Annual pay*
Watcher	40	480	50	600	50	600
Prob. Tidewaiter	45	540	70	840		
3rd Class Tidewaiter	50	600	80	960	80	960
2nd Class Tidewaiter	60	720	100	1,200	100	1,200
1st Class Tidewaiter	70	840	110	1,320	110	1,320
Senior Tidewaiter	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	130	1,560
Assist. Examiner	80	960	80 + 50	1,560	130-145	1,560-1,740
Examiner	90	1,080	90 + 60	1,800	160-175	1,920-2,100
Chief Examiner	100	1,200	100 + 100	2,400	200-225	2,400-2,700
Boat Officer	100	1,200	100 + 75	2,100	?	?
Assist. Tidesurveyor	100	1,200	125 + 75	2,400	?	?
Tidesurveyor	250	1,800-3,000	250 + 150	4,800	450	5,400

* The first amount was issued monthly and the second amount multiplied by three was issued quarterly.

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[30] Pay information taken from CSA, 679(1) 26896, 'Inspector General's circulars, vol. 7, second series, nos. 801-1,000, 1897-1901', circular no. 848 (second series), 3 October 1898.
[31] Pay information taken from CSA, 679(1) 26896, 'Inspector General's circulars, vol. 7, second series, nos. 801-1,000, 1897-1901', circular no. 849 (second series), 4 October 1898; CSA, 679(1) 16826, 'Commissioners' reports on Out-Door Staff petitions for increase in pay in reply to circular no. 2,545', enclosure in Swatow dispatch no. 5,022, 27 July 1916.

Table 3.5- **Foreign Coast Staff rates of pay in *Haikuan Taels*[32]**

Rank/Date	c. 1880		1898	
	Monthly pay	*Annual pay*	*Monthly pay*	*Annual pay*
Gunners	40-70	480-840	60-100 + 30 mess allowance	720-1,200 + 360 mess allowance
Third Engineer	75	900	150 + 40 mess allowance	1,800 + 480 mess allowance
Second Engineer	100	1,200	200 + 40 mess allowance	2,400 + 480 mess allowance
First Engineer	150	1,800	250 + 40 mess allowance	3,000 + 480 mess allowance
Third Officer	50	600	100 + 40 mess allowance	1,200 + 480 mess allowance
Second Officer	75	900	125 + 40 mess allowance	1,500 + 480 mess allowance
First Officer	100	1,200	150 + 40 mess allowance	1,800 + 480 mess allowance
Commander	200	2,400	300 + 50 mess allowance	3,600 + 600 mess allowance

Table 3.6- **Foreign Marine Staff rates of pay in *Haikuan Taels*[33]**

Rank/Date	c. 1880		1898	
	Monthly pay	*Annual pay*	*Monthly pay*	*Annual pay*
Engineers				
Assistant Engineer	300	3,600	500	6,000
Engineer	400	4,800	600	7,200
Engineer-in Chief	500	6,000	800	9,600
River Police				
Constables	50 + 10	720	75	900
Sergeants	60 + 10	840	100	1,200
Inspector	100	1,200	150	1,800
Harbours Staff				
Signalmen	20-35	240-420	30-60	360-720
3rd Berthing Officer	75	900	100	1,200
2nd Berthing Officer	100	1,200	150	1,800
3rd Berthing Officer	125	1,500	200	2,400
Assistant Harbour Master	175	2,100	300	3,600
Coast Inspector	500	6,000	800	9,600
Lights Staff				
4th Class Lightkeeper (A,B)	20-25	240-300	30-50	360-600
3rd Class Lightkeeper (A,B)	30-40	360-480	60-70	720-840
2nd Class Lightkeeper (A,B)	50-60	600-720	80-90	960-1,080
Chief Lightkeepers (A,B)	70-80	840-960	110-120	1,320-1,440

It must be remembered, however, that Outdoor salaries compared extremely favourably to the remuneration provided for similar work in Britain, especially in the

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[32] Figures taken from CSA, 679(1) 26896, 'Inspector General's circulars, vol. 7, second series, nos. 801-1,000, 1897-1901', circular no. 858 (second series), November 1898.
[33] Figures taken from CSA, 679(1) 26896, 'Inspector General's circulars, vol. 7, second series, nos. 801-1,000, 1897-1901', circular no. 860 (second series), 18 November 1898.

nineteenth century. A Third Class Tidewaiter joining the Customs in 1880, for example, received roughly the equivalent of £265 per year as compared with a £250 entry level salary for the British Civil Service, an employment option which would have in any case been closed to men of a typical Outdoor man's social rank. Outdoor salaries did, however, prove inadequate in the face of wartime inflation and hardships. In 1916 a petition submitted by the foreign Outdoor Staff across all ports calling for improved working conditions protested that:

> Under existing conditions, most of us find our salaries barely sufficient to meet the cost of ordinary living expenses, much less to enable us to set aside anything for possible contingencies, i.e. an occasional holiday, or illness, the latter—if permanent—involving discharge from the Service, without pension or sufficient equivalent.[34]

A second petition from the Shanghai Outdoor Staff, enclosing statements of monthly household expenditure as compared with their salaries, revealed that Outdoor employees rarely managed to save over $20 per month from their pay after settling basic household expenses. Some, especially those with families, did not even manage to break even; F. W. Rowland, Assistant Examiner A, for example, totalled the cost of maintaining a family of a wife and three children at $300 per month, expenses which his pay of $221 could not stretch to cover.[35] Moreover, Outdoor Staff salaries compared adversely with those offered by alternative employment options in China. The Shanghai Commissioner reported that whereas a Watcher entering the Service received $76 per month, an employee of the Public Works Department of the Shanghai Municipal Council beginning work as an overseer or Assistant Inspector was paid a basic salary of $171.[36] A Third Class Tidewaiter's basic monthly salary, at 80 taels per month, was even less than that received by recruits to the SMP (105 taels in 1920), who were looked upon as the lowest of the low by Shanghai's foreign communities.[37] Not only were wages barely sufficient to cover basic household costs; they also placed Outdoor staff at a distinct disadvantage to other foreign employees working in comparable jobs in Shanghai. In the treaty port world where status was a

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[34] CSA, 679(1) 16826, 'Commissioners' reports on Out-door Staff petitions for increase in pay in reply to circular no. 2,545'. The petition originated with the Canton foreign Outdoor Staff and was then supported by staff in ports across China. Example of a prototype petition is taken from the Yochow Outdoor Staff's petition, submitted 4 July 1916,

[35] CSA, 679(1) 16826, 'Commissioners' reports on Out-door Staff petitions for increase in pay in reply to circular no. 2,545', petition of Shanghai Outdoor Staff, 25 August 1916.

[36] CSA, 679(1) 16826, 'Commissioners' reports on Out-door Staff petitions for increase in pay in reply to circular no. 2,545', enclosure in Shanghai dispatch no. 14,122, 23 October 1916,

[37] Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, p. 105.

paramount concern, the low pay of the Outdoor Staff consigned them to a place near the bottom of foreign society's hierarchies.

Most Commissioners concurred with the petitioners' views on the inadequacy of Outdoor salaries and some observed that low salaries and prospects would inevitably lead to discontent and disaffection. The Nanjing Commissioner warned that:

> If he [an Outdoor employee] only gains a competent income at a later period of his career, he will probably have already become discontented and feel, too, that he has wasted the best years of his life in a vain pursuit, particularly if he compares his own position with those of his contemporaries.[38]

Senior Inspectorate staff were less sympathetic. The Statistical Secretary, Taylor, for example, indignantly claimed that Outdoor men 'do not earn their pay' and asserted that commitment to the job should have been incentive enough for reliable service, even in wartime:

> Under present conditions there is only one inducement to give zealous and conscientious service—that is, a strict sense of duty—and unfortunately the class from which the Out-door Staff is recruited, with the exception of an occasional Bluejacket, is not trained as to make simple duty an incentive.[39]

The Inspectorate, then, refused to acknowledge the material hardships experienced by the Outdoor Staff and obstinately insisted that a deep-rooted sense of dedication to the Service was the only acceptable motivation for good conduct. With such low opinions of the Outdoor Staff's worth entrenched in the highest levels of the Service it is not surprising that the problem of low pay was never remedied and that the grievances of the Outdoor staff continued to be sounded into the 1940s.

Preferential treatment of the Indoor Staff was also evident in the leave allowances issued to each branch. Throughout most of the Service's existence foreign Indoor employees were entitled to their first leave of up to two years on half pay after seven years of service, and then every five years subsequently.[40] Outdoor Staff, on the other hand, were only entitled to their first leave of six months on full pay, with the option of extending the leave by up to six months without pay, after nine years of continuous service, and then every seven subsequent years.[41] The pattern of inequality between Indoor and Outdoor benefits was also present in the retirement

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[38] CSA, 679(1) 16826, 'Commissioners' reports on Out-door Staff petitions for increase in pay in reply to circular no. 2,545', Nanjing dispatch no. 2,450, 19 July 1916.
[39] CSA, 679(1) 16826, 'Commissioners' reports on Out-door Staff petitions for increase in pay in reply to circular no. 2,545', Statistical Secretary no. 2,807 to IG, 13 July 1916.
[40] CSA, 679(3) 1599, 'NRS dispatches, 1910', 'Memo of existing regulations', enclosure in NRS letter to IG no. 3,773, 17 August 1910.
[41] CSA, 679(3) 1603, 'NRS dispatches, 1914', 'Admission to the Customs Service: Out-door Staff', enclosure in NRS letter to IG, 24 April 1914.

allowances offered to each branch (discussed in detail in Chapter Five). What the Inspectorate neglected to provide in material benefits for Outdoor Staff, however, it attempted to compensate for with symbolic recognition of good service. As a reward for long service or for loyalty to the Customs under difficult circumstances employees in all branches were commended in official circulars, granted cash bonuses, or even awarded medals. Customs practice in this respect can be placed within a wider trend of rewarding service in empire with symbolic prizes. David Cannadine goes so far as to argue that the honours systems of empire played a crucial role in defining colonial hierarchies and fostering a sense of commitment to the imperial project. 'As such, this carefully graded system of titles and orders, ribbons and stars, helped to promote a sense of common belonging and collective participation, and it created and projected an ordered, unified, hierarchical picture of empire', Cannadine claims.[42] Although Cannadine's contention that empire hierarchies were principally determined by social and official rank rather than being constructed around race, nationality and gender is somewhat overstated, it does nonetheless highlight the importance of status in determining an individual's place within colonial societies.[43] In the outposts of informal empire, such as China, which lacked formal and visible control from the state, the emblems and ceremonies of empire—in the form of patriotic parades, celebrations, memorials and salutes— were essential to configuring the identity of foreign communities and to strengthening semicolonial power through a public display.[44]

The CCS was not immune from the predilection for ceremony and symbolic reward in the empire world. The cataloguing of the various honours and medals awarded to members of staff by either the Chinese government, respective home governments, or by the Customs itself in every annual Service list illustrates their importance to the Inspectorate. The bestowal of awards upon its employees could only enhance the Customs' status both within China and amongst the hierarchy of overseas administrative services. Many of the decorations held by foreign staff were medals awarded for service in the First World War. However, a sizable number of foreign employees—293 in total—were conferred with official orders and ranks by

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[42] David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire* (London, 2001), p. 98.
[43] Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, p. 123-6. Cannadine argues that the British usually viewed colonial subjects in individual rather than collective terms, and were therefore more concerned with rank and status similarities with the British than with racial differences.
[44] See, for example, Bryna Goodman, 'Improvisations on a Semicolonial Theme', on the Shanghai Municipal Council's 1893 Silver Jubilee celebrations. Also, Bickers, *Britain in China*, pp. 104-6.

the Chinese government, including orders of the Chia Ho, Double Dragon awards, and various civil ranks.[45] Although Hart initially ruled that employees must not accept rewards from Chinese or foreign officials 'in the form of money, buttons, medals or decorations' without his permission, the Inspectorate was also aware of the prestige conferred on the Service and its staff by these honours, and so was loath to refuse those offered by the higher levels of the Chinese government.[46] Many of these prizes were bestowed upon prominent Commissioners in recognition of long service. Inspector Generals in particular received numerous honours from the government; Aglen collected ten and Maze accumulated fifteen during their terms in office.

Symbolic appreciation of special services was, however, open to employees of any rank or department who distinguished themselves. Numerous Outdoor and Marine men were bestowed with medals and certificates by the Chinese government as thanks for brave and loyal service. One such man was B. Ashurst, in the Outdoor Staff 1920-31, who was presented with a silver medal, certificate and laudatory scroll to show the government's appreciation of the dangerous rescue work he performed during a gale in 1921 at Taishan.[47] In the higher ranks of the 'outdoor' branches decorations abounded. W. F. Tyler, for example, who joined the Coast Staff as a Third Officer in 1889 and resigned as Coast Inspector in 1918, had received no less than thirteen awards from the Chinese government by the end of his career. Many of these decorations were rewards for Tyler's loyal service during the 1894-95 Sino-Japanese War as a naval advisor and co-commander of the Chinese naval fleet.[48] All members of the Service, then, had an opportunity to distinguish themselves through exceptional service.

The Inspectorate was attuned to the value of symbolic awards as an incentive for loyal service and sought to make use of it. In an attempt to curb growing disillusionment amongst the foreign staff after the Nationalist rise to power threatened their hegemonic position in the Service the Inspectorate introduced a 'Customs medal for meritorious service' in 1930, to be conferred upon those 'who have deserved recognition for long and meritorious service or in cases of exceptional merit'.[49] The

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[45] See Customs staff decorations, degrees and awards database.
[46] *Documents Illustrative*, vol. I, circular no. 51 of 1875 (first series), 'Decorations, rewards, etc.', 31 December 1875.
[47] See Customs staff decorations, degrees and awards database.
[48] See Tyler, *Pulling Strings in China*, pp. 38-60.
[49]CSA, 679(1) 16094, 'Customs medals for meritorious service', memorandum for IG by Stanley F. Wright (Maze's Personal Secretary), 8 February 1930,

minimum qualifying period for the medal was twenty-five years of continuous service, with gold, silver and bronze medals awarded according to the length of service, although the award could also be conferred in cases deserving special recognition regardless of whether the full period had been served. Maze's official circular outlining the scheme explained that 'while letters or despatches of thanks and of commendation may be valued, they have not the same appeal as more tangible marks of appreciation'. Moreover, the medal would have a wider function:

> It is believed that the institution of this medal will encourage the Staff and promote the *esprit de corps* of the Service; and each Commissioner ought to arrange that when the medals are awarded to members of the local establishment the presentations should be made officially and ceremoniously by the Superintendent in the presence of the entire staff.'[50]

Maze was careful to point out that the medal was officially endorsed by the Chinese government and, what is more, would be bestowed in a special ceremony, factors which could only enhance the award's prestige. In Maze's eyes, the promise of special thanks was incentive enough to ensure good conduct and boost morale.

Many employees would have doubtless disagreed, remaining disgruntled at the lack of material recognition afforded for good service, especially in the 'outdoor' branches. Occasionally, though, the Inspectorate *did* reward staff materially under exceptional circumstances. During the 1911-12 Xinhai revolution, for example, the unwavering loyalty of those employees who stood by their posts was rewarded with an extra month's pay.[51] Similarly, the unswerving commitment of the Customs staff at Sansing during an occupation by the Hunghutzu in 1919 was rewarded with a bonus of one month's pay.[52] However, rewards of this kind were rare and were something of a departure from the Inspectorate's usual line on benefits and rewards for its staff.

Until the end the Inspectorate remained resolutely committed to the belief that its vision of a model administrative Service could be realised through cultivating a

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[50] CSA, 679(1) 16094, 'Customs medals for meritorious service', circular no. 4,362, 2 December 1931.
[51] CSA, 679(1) 16096, 'Devotion of Customs Staff to duty during trying times'.
[52] CSA, 679(1) 16096, 'Devotion of Customs Staff to duty during trying times', Harbin dispatch no. 1,961 to IG, 29 July 1919; Harbin dispatch no. 1,986 to IG, 16 September 1919. Sansing was a small outport near Harbin. The label 'Hunghutzu' ('Red Beards') was originally applied to Chinese immigrants working in northern Manchuria without the sanction of the Chinese state. Hunghutzu groups encompassed people of diverse social origins—most of whom were fleeing the law. Hunghutzu bands were engaged in banditry and followed a strict ethical code and social regulations. See Mark Mancall and Georges Jidkoff, 'The Hung Hu-tzu of Northeast China', in Jean Chesneaux (ed.), *Popular Movements and Secret Societies in China 1840-1950* (Stanford CA, 1972), pp. 125-34.

deep sense of duty amongst its staff. In the Inspectorate's view, edifying circulars reminding staff of their responsibilities and symbolic rewards, such as the Customs medal, were all that was necessary to foster *esprit de corps* and commitment to the Customs mission. Material reward was considered almost superfluous to the creation of an honest and disinterested service. In reality, however, tangible benefits, such as pay, leave allowances, and pensions were essential to achieving this goal, as evidenced by the near-constant dissatisfaction sounded by the 'outdoor' branches about their pay and prospects. As staff numbers swelled and political turmoil caused unprecedented material hardships, 'outdoor' grievances about the preferential treatment of the Indoor Staff in terms of pay and benefits intensified. This discontent amongst the Outdoor, Coast and Marine ranks had a palpable effect on levels of malpractice in the Service. Of the 844 foreign employees recorded as dismissed from the Service during the entire history of the Inspectorate, only thirty began their careers as Assistants in the Indoor Staff; the remainder were members of the Outdoor, Coast and Marine Staffs.[53]

[53] Figures derived from service lists database of employees withdrawn from service.

3) Misconduct, malpractice and the importance of reputation

The frequent failure of the Inspectorate to instil a sense of unswerving loyalty in its staff often manifested itself in misconduct and occasionally in professional corruption. This section will explore the various types of behaviour considered as misconduct by the Inspectorate—from general misbehaviour to professional malpractice to unionisation—and the extent to which they were present in the foreign staff. As we have seen, in the late 1920s and 1930s, when the foreign character of the Customs was coming under attack from the Nationalist government, the Inspectorate became increasingly self-conscious about incidents of misconduct amongst its foreign ranks. A particular concern, therefore, will be the ways in which the Inspectorate's handling of malpractice and misconduct cases was adapted to protect its image of incorruptibility in this changing political climate.

In any Service employing a large subordinate staff, general misconduct in the form of drunkenness, violent outbursts and plain incompetence was always a problem. In order to deter men from transgressing the SMP enforced a military-style discipline and inflicted harsh punishments on officers who were found guilty of such minor offences as insubordination, drunkenness and failure to report for duty.[54] The Inspectorate, although its punishments were usually less draconian, also had few qualms about dispensing with the services of low-ranking outdoor employees—especially in the nineteenth century when foreign recruits were plentiful— for even the most inconsequential misdemeanours. In 1887, two Shanghai Tidewaiters were dismissed on Hart's orders merely for complaining about the quality of food on board ship![55] Staff insobriety, however, was the Inspectorate's main bugbear from its earliest days and, in a service where reputation was everything, it was taken very seriously.

Many employees in the 'outdoor' branches of the Service appear to taken little heed of Inspectorate warnings about the penalties for insobriety judging from the

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[54] Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, pp. 90-1.

[55] CSA, 679(2) 1591, 'Shanghai Customs: dispatches to IG, 1887 (July-Dec)', Shanghai dispatch no. 816, 28 September 1884. The two Tidewaiters, Gregory and Wilson, were dismissed after making the complaint because, in Hart's view, the incident revealed that 'they are evidently not of the stamp required for the position they are employed in'. However, after petitioning to be re-employed they were later reinstated as Tidewaiters. See CSA, 679(2) 1521, 'Shanghai Customs: dispatches from IG, 1887 (July-Dec.)', Shanghai dispatch no. 3,592, 16 September 1887, and Shanghai dispatch no. 3,614, 12 October 1887.

frequency with which they contravened the rules. When drinking impaired their ability to perform their work junior employees were almost always immediately dismissed.[56] When it came to off-duty drinking habits, however, the Inspectorate first attempted to prevent their progression into a more serious problem for the Service. Third Class Tidewaiter Hegrat in Shanghai, for example, was pressured into signing a pledge to refrain from drinking alcohol for twelve months in May 1883; if Hegrat broke his promise he would be obliged to forfeit one month's salary to 'some charitable institution'. Unfortunately, this measure failed to curb his drinking and in February 1884 Hegrat was dismissed after throwing a tumbler at the Customs club 'boy' whilst drunk.[57] Senior employees were usually treated more mercifully unless, that is, their antics created a public scandal. An incident involving Tidesurveyor Gallagher in Shanghai in 1884 is a case in point. Drunkenness was a recurrent problem with Gallagher, whose 'frequent muddled state from inebriety renders him incapable of understanding or carrying out the simplest orders that may be given him from time to time', Chief Tidesurveyor Howard reported. Matters came to a head when Gallagher was found 'drunk and incapable of performing his duty' early one morning, causing the Commissioner to call an official enquiry. During the enquiry the charges rapidly mounted against Gallagher when it was discovered that he had recently taken a Chinese woman—who the Inspectorate suspected was a prostitute—to watch the band at the Astor House gardens whilst intoxicated. Although Gallagher protested that the woman in question was perfectly 'respectable', he was forced to resign or else face dismissal for the charge of 'gross immorality'.[58] Gallagher's unrelenting insobriety, which had impaired his professional performance on countless occasions, had not given rise to any disciplinary action from the Inspectorate. In threatening to create a public scandal which would reflect badly upon the Customs as a whole, however, Gallagher had overstepped the mark and was quickly removed from the Service ranks.

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[56] Tidewaiter Phair, for example, was immediately dismissed for 'drinking and keeping late hours' in Swatow in 1882 when he failed to report for duty after a night of heavy drinking. CSA, 679(2) 1868, 'Swatow Customs: dispatches to IG', Swatow dispatch no. 188, 23 December 1882.
[57] CSA, 679(2) 1584, 'Shanghai Customs: dispatches to IG, 1884', Shanghai dispatch no. 65, 29 February 1884.
[58] CSA, 679(2) 1585, 'Shanghai Customs: dispatches to IG, 1884'. Gallagher's statement and Chief Tidesurveyor Howard's report enclosed in Shanghai dispatch no. 207, 31 July 1884; minutes of the inquiry enclosed in Shanghai dispatch no. 226, 15 August 1884. Gallagher was permitted to resign in view of his long service.

Disciplinary cases involving employees charged with insobriety were equally commonplace in the twentieth century, especially amongst the Coast and Lights Staffs who often led lonely lives aboard ship or sequestered in an isolated lighthouse. Furthermore, in an age of burgeoning nationalism and anti-imperialism, irresponsible behaviour on the part of some employees threatened to further undermine foreign authority in the Service. In 1929, for example, the Qiongzhou Commissioner wrote to Maze pleading for advice on how to deal with Boat Officer B, G. J. Walters, a habitual drunkard. Although Walters' drinking habit did not interfere with this work it was nonetheless 'bad enough to spoil his reputation as a Boat Officer in the eyes of the native crew', who were rapidly losing all respect for their senior officer.[59] Walters was given a chance to redress his behaviour, but by 1934 his heavy drinking was still causing a problem and he was duly paid off. By the 1930s, however, prompted by the recent dismissal of a 'senior foreign employee' for this offence, Maze felt it necessary to reiterate the Customs' age-old stance on insobriety, warning that men found drunk on duty would be immediately dismissed. Dismissal, however, would also be the punishment meted out for 'intoxication in private life when the consequences of this condition are of such a nature as to cause scandal bringing disgrace to the Service, or to result in acts of which cognisance must be taken by police or other authorities'.[60] Throughout the Foreign Inspectorate's existence the question of whether a drinking problem impaired an employee's ability to do their work was of secondary importance to the question of whether their conduct would provoke public and official reprobation of the Service. Furthermore, not only did these cases reflect badly upon the Customs, they also carried serious weight for the individuals involved. Dismissal from the Customs signified a demoralising personal failure. Especially for junior employees, whose services were considered entirely expendable, dismissal often led to months of unemployment, hardship and dislocation in a foreign land.

Another more disturbing type of misconduct which threatened to damage the Service's reputation was violent behaviour on the part of employees. Violence was, of course, a feature of all colonial societies, especially in the formative years of a colonial state and in the period of decline and decolonisation, and the use of coercion

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[59] CSA, 679(1) 31639, 'IG confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1929', Qiongzhou confidential letter to IG, 27 February 1929,

[60] CSA, 679(1) 16100, 'Instructions regarding conduct and discipline of Customs Staff, 1929-49', circular no. 5,473, 27 March 1937, Maze reiterated his predecessors' rulings on drunkenness in the Service referring to Hart's circular no. 25 of 1869 and Aglen's circular no. 2,332 and circular no. 2,541.

and aggression to control colonised peoples has been well-documented.[61] In the early years the Foreign Inspectorate, too, sanctioned violence on the part of its employees if it was committed in the line of duty. In 1880, for example, Hart vowed to fight the case of Canton Tidewaiter Page, who had shot and killed a Chinese smuggler, 'to the nth'.[62] Usually, however, the Customs, considered itself to be aloof from the squalid brutality of colonial society. As a service which was ultimately answerable to the Chinese government the Inspectorate's official line was that violence towards Chinese colleagues, servants or members of the public would not be tolerated.

In reality foreign employees, and especially Indoor men, were often given second, or even third and fourth chances, after being found guilty of assault. In 1864, for example, British Indoor employee M. R. Mercer was reported to the Inspectorate for having beaten his servant for forgetting to change his bathwater. Mercer was a thoroughly unpleasant character, Shanghai Commissioner Dick reported, who had deliberately made enemies amongst the other non-British Customs employees in his quarters on the grounds 'that they were "foreigners"'. Furthermore, Dick reminded Hart, there had been two previous incidents 'of beating Chinese' in the Customs in 1864 alone.[63] Mercer was, notwithstanding his violent conduct, permitted to stay in the Service until his resignation in 1871. The implication of three Canton foreign Outdoor Staff in a brutal attack which left one Chinese man dead and two wounded provoked a tougher response from the IG. In a circular responding to this appalling event Hart warned Commissioners to immediately dismiss those found guilty of insobriety and assault and to carefully monitor the off-duty behaviour of employees so as to detect aggressive and quarrelsome tendencies at the earliest opportunity.[64]

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[61] Anderson and Killingray have, for example, shown how colonial police forces policed by coercion rather than consent, especially in the 'frontier' period of colonial states; 'Consent, Coercion and Colonial Control: Policing the Empire, 1830-1940', in Anderson and Killingray (eds.), *Policing the Empire*, pp. 9-11. On colonial police forces and violence also see Norman Miners, 'The Localization of the Hong Kong Police Force, 1842-1947', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1990), pp. 296-315. On the brutal means of control exercised by one seemingly 'enlightened' colonial administrator— 'Cocky' Hahn, Native Commissioner of Ovamboland in South West Africa— see Patricia Hayes, '"Cocky" Hahn and the "Black Venus": The Making of a Native Commissioner in South West Africa, 1915-46', in Hall (eds.), *Cultures of Empire*.

[62] *Archives of China's Imperial Maritime Customs*, vol. 1, letter Z/37, Hart to Campbell, 30 December 1880. See Chapter Two for further details on the Page shooting case.

[63] CSA, 679(2) 1557, 'Shanghai Customs: dispatches to IG, 1861-6', Shanghai dispatch no. 54 to IG, 8 September 1864,

[64] CSA, 679(1) 26892, 'IG's circulars, second series, vol. 3, 1882-85', circular no. 233, 29 August 1883. Hart reported that the Outdoor Deputy Commissioner, Tidesurveyor and Boat Officer had all been removed from the Canton staff as punishment for their failure to detect the belligerent conduct of the three men responsible for the attack at an earlier date.

Occasional cases of foreign employees assaulting Chinese subordinates or members of the public were also present in the twentieth century. A British constable in the River Police, C. D. Murphy, for example, was dismissed in 1923 'for the grave offence of assaulting a Chinese' after seventeen years in the Customs. His entreaties for reinstatement were flatly refused, despite his long service.[65] However, employees stationed in remote locations, away from the watchful eye of the Commissioner, could escape censure more easily. The Inspectorate found, for example, that complaints made in 1938 about Lightkeeper Sorensen's 'violent temper while under the influence of intoxicants' by villagers living near his lighthouse outside of Qiongzhou were difficult to prove, and Sorensen was quietly transferred to another port rather than dismissed.[66] The Inspectorate was, however, clearly uncomfortable with the presence of violence in the foreign staff. Evidence of racist and aggressive behaviour towards the public sat uncomfortably with the Inspectorate's construction of the foreign staff as the de facto countrymen of their Chinese colleagues.

Under certain circumstances men could also turn on their fellow foreigners in the Customs Service. The foreign staff was never the model of multinational harmony that the Inspectorate envisaged it to be, and international conflict could cause latent national tensions within the staff to surface. A serious incident of this type occurred in Canton in 1915 when two former British Tidewaiters, who had recently resigned to enlist in the British army, joined forces with a Danish Tidewaiter in an attack on German Outdoor employee F. B. Immendorff. In his report on the attack Tidewaiter Immendorff recounted how the men taunted him with 'many unrepeatable insults about my nationality' and threatened 'that they were going to kill me and every other German and intended to wreck my house'. In self-defence Immendorff struck the men with a club, permanently paralysing the Dane, Tidewaiter Spur. Canton Commissioner Merrill concluded that although Spur's motivations for the attack were unknown, the two British men were 'prompted, undoubtedly, by national feeling, to a

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[65] TNA, FO228/3497, Shanghai Consul-General Sidney Barton to British minister to China, Sir Ronald McLeay, 6 April 1923, enclosing letters from C. D. Murphey asking the consul to intervene to secure receipt of his Customs retirement allowance.

[66] CSA, 679(1) 1000, 'Confidential C.I. to and from Commissioners and senior Marine officers', Qiongzhou Commissioner to Coast Inspector Carrel, 18 February 1938, The Commissioner was inclined to treat Sorensen leniently because his light station had recently been attacked by robbers, and recommended a 'change of climate' both to help him recover from this attack and to remove him from the area in which he had been causing trouble.

display of hostile action'.[67] Especially in times of international conflict, national enmities could reveal themselves in a particularly violent form. In these times, Customs cosmopolitanism was the cause of as much discord as cross-national harmony.

An entirely different form of malpractice found in the Customs Service—one which posed an even greater threat to the Foreign Inspectorate's reputation—was fraud and corruption. In a tax-collecting organisation such as the Customs chances to opportunistically embezzle funds were manifold, especially after the Inspectorate assumed direct control for the collection and remittance of Customs revenues after 1912. In the SMP, too, cases of foreign policemen abusing their position to forcibly extract bribes occasionally arose.[68] Although the majority of Customs men were honest, reports of fraud and bribe-taking increased markedly in the twentieth century when greater opportunities to embezzle funds coupled with the rising cost of living and accompanying material hardships in the 1920s and 1930s induced many to profit from their position.

Guilt was, however, usually difficult to determine in suspected malpractice cases, especially when an individual acted alone and was careful to cover his tracks. Grosely, the corrupt Customs official sketched at the beginning of this chapter, managed to evade punishment for the entirety of his career according to Maugham; his superior officers had their suspicions yet were never able to secure enough proof against him, Maugham explained.[69] Furthermore, it was often difficult to distinguish cases of deliberate malpractice from simple mistakes. A case in point is that of Danish Supernumerary Assistant B in Tianjin, S. A. Klubien, who was accused in 1928 of stealing a deposit paid towards the duty on a large shipment whilst in charge of the appraising department the previous year. The affair was suspicious for several reasons; the deposits on cargoes were not usually dealt with by the appraising department, Klubien cashed the deposit cheque in contravention of usual procedure, and the record of the transaction had mysteriously disappeared in the intervening period.[70] Klubien 'protested his innocence with firmness and even with indignation'

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[67] CSA, 679(1) 17325, 'Affray between certain members and ex-members of the Out-Door Staff, Canton, 1915', despatch no. 9,862, Commissioner Merrill to Aglen, 3rd November 1915.
[68] Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, pp. 109-10.
[69] Maugham, 'The Gentleman in the Parlour,' p.161.
[70] CSA, 679(1) 16922, 'Fraud on Revenue, Mr S. A. Klubien, Tientsin, 1928', Tianjin dispatch no. 8,655 to IG, 17 May 1928. Another member of staff reported that he had seen several applications, the

and the investigating committee admitted they had no conclusive proof that he had deliberately defrauded the revenue.[71] Although the evidence against him was mainly circumstantial, Klubien's 'highly suspicious' answers to the investigating committee's questions, however, swung the Inspectorate's opinion against him, especially after he refused to allow the committee access to his bank account records, and he was eventually found guilty and dismissed.[72] In a time when anti-imperialist sentiment was mounting, the Inspectorate could not afford to lay itself open to attack by allowing suspected malpractice cases to go unpunished, even if evidence was scanty. Particularly as he was an Indoor man, who was expected to provide a model of upright conduct for his Chinese and 'outdoor' colleagues to follow, Klubien was a liability. Unlike many of his disgraced colleagues, however, Klubien's dismissal did not lead to a life of unemployment and penury; after returning to his native Denmark he began a new and successful career as a writer of children's books, one of which featured a Customs officer.

By the twentieth century the Customs had become much more ruthless about punishing employees guilty of even the most consequential offences. In 1916 it came to the Inspectorate's attention that J. A. Berthet, Examiner and honorary secretary of the Wuhu Customs Club, had been quaffing beer and spirits and smoking cigarettes from club supplies without settling his bill or recording his approbations. Berthet had obviously regarded free drinks and cigarettes as a perk of his position as club secretary but the Inspectorate thought otherwise and dismissed him.[73] In 1938, Chief Examiner in Shanghai, Oliver Hall, who had served in the Customs for twenty-eight

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records of duty deposit payments, in Klubien's personal safe. At the time of investigating the missing deposit, however, the applications had disappeared.

[71] CSA, 679(1) 16922, 'Fraud on Revenue, Mr S. A. Klubien, Tientsin, 1928', London Office dispatch no. 4,994 to IG, 4 September 1928. As Klubien was on leave at the time when the missing deposit was discovered he was required to travel to London for an interview with the NRS, Stephenson. The Inspectorate was not satisfied with this interview and called an official commission to investigate the case on Klubien's return to Tianjin in October 1928.

[72] CSA, 679(1) 16922, 'Fraud on Revenue, Mr S. A. Klubien, Tientsin, 1928', Tianjin dispatch no. 8,776 to IG, 8 November 1928, enclosing the report of the investigating commission. Another case in which blame was difficult to ascertain is that of Chief Examiner A, D. G. W. Roft, and Acting Inspector of Examiners, J. C. Power, who were accused of defrauding the Post Office in Tianjin in 1926. The allegations were never proved, although suspicions remained against Roft because he appeared to live in a style beyond his means. See CSA, 679(1) 2482, 'Accusations of Malpractices against Messrs. J. C. Power and D. G. W. Roft, Tientsin, 1926-27'. The Post Office, too, seemed to harbour high levels of corruption. In 1922 alone two foreign postal employees, Examiner Grandon at Tianjin and Examiner Theodoro at Harbin, were dismissed for defrauding the revenue. CSA, 679(1) 15431, 'Superannuation and retirement of foreign Out-Door Staff, 1920-24', Harbin dispatch no. 2,745, 1 November 1922.

[73] CSA, 679(3) 2226, 'Wuhu despatches nos. 4,131-4,220', Wuhu dispatch no. 4,159, 7 July 1916.

years, was brought before an official enquiry along with his alleged accomplice, Assistant Examiner Chang Hsuan, merely as a result of his receiving a crate of beer and some oranges from a Chinese merchant. Hall protested that the presents were entirely unsolicited, yet the Inspectorate nonetheless found him guilty of taking bribes and he was discharged.[74] Outdoor men and particularly Examiners, who were charged with examining and assessing cargoes, were particularly susceptible to taking bribes and the Inspectorate refused to gamble on Hall's honesty, despite his long service.[75] The cases of Hall and Berthet, dismissed for minor offences, also highlight the human cost of deviating from the Inspectorate's rules. Dismissed and disgraced from a well-respected service, these men would have found that their bad reputations preceded them in the cloistered treaty port world, making it extremely difficult to find alternative work in China. For a man such as Hall, who had eight children to provide for, the consequences of dismissal could be devastating.

A much more serious incident of corruption in the Outdoor Staff, which really *did* jeopardise the Foreign Inspectorate's reputation, was uncovered in 1930 in Tianjin when a recently-dismissed Chinese Tidewaiter named Wong, claiming that he 'wished to unburden his conscience', reported the existence of a highly-organised Outdoor Staff syndicate for the purpose of extorting bribes.[76] Although their informant was described as being 'far from normal-minded' the Inspectorate took his allegations seriously and launched an investigation. According to Wong, the ringleader of the group was R. J. Redd who had been dismissed the previous year, when holding the position of Assistant Boat Officer A, along with Wong and another Chinese Tidewaiter for accepting bribes at Shanghai.[77] The Shanghai investigation had, it emerged, failed to discover the extent of the corruption. Staff Secretary Prettejohn, sent to Tianjin to investigate, soon found that no less than sixty-two employees, forty-two of them Chinese and twenty foreign, had possibly been involved in the syndicate, which operated on the principal that all members would work to extract bribes in return for lower duty charges, the profits of which would then be

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[74] CSA, 679(1) 16953, 'Shanghai Fraud Case, 1938, involving Messrs. O. Hall, Senior Chief Examiner A and Chang Hsuan, Assistant Examiner A', Shanghai no. 29,413 to IG, 1 June 1938. Both Hall and Chang were discharged rather than dismissed, in recognition of their long service.
[75] Also see the case of S. Heiberg, Examiner A, dismissed in 1922 at Shanghai for accepting bribes amounting to the relatively small sum of $92. CSA, 679(1) 15431, 'Superannuation and retirement of foreign Out-Door Staff, 1920-24', Shanghai dispatch no. 17,492, 17 January 1922.
[76] CSA, 679(1) 16919, 'Enquiry into corruption in Tientsin Out-door Staff arising out of the R.J. Redd case, 1930', Tianjin dispatch no. 9,072 to IG, 14 January 1930,
[77] See CSA, 679(1) 12033, 'Mr. R. J. Redd's Career'.

pooled and shared amongst the syndicate.[78] All those suspected of participating were interviewed, but Prettejohn found that 'it was impossible to establish a degree of guilt' amongst the individuals because of the ambiguous and contradictory statements of those concerned.[79] In the end the investigating committee was forced to rely on the previous records and 'characters' of the suspects in apportioning blame. First Class Tidewaiter Klimenko, for example, denied all involvement in the syndicate, yet was considered guilty because he 'gave the impression of being not only a crafty fool but a rascal into the bargain'.[80] In the end, however, Prettejohn only dismissed the ringleaders—three foreign Tidewaiters—and the others escaped with warnings. Although the Inspectorate officially took a zero tolerance approach to corruption, dismissing all of the sixty-two culpable employees would have both disabled Customs work at Tianjin and caused a public scandal.

Endemic corruption in a port not only undermined the public reputation of the Customs; after the Guomindang rise to power, when the Foreign Inspectorate had to be increasingly mindful of its actions and the conduct of its staff, incidents such as these threatened the position of the foreign IG and the position of the foreign staff as a whole. Evidence of widespread malpractices in the foreign staff in collusion with Chinese colleagues sat uncomfortably with the Foreign Inspectorate's claim to have stamped out corruption in the customs administration through the model conduct and guidance of the foreign staff. Maze was clearly aware of this and in 1933 he issued a circular in response to a recent malpractice case involving collusion between Customs employees and an American firm in Jiaozhou, warning that even when the guilt of individuals could not be conclusively proved, 'it need occasion no surprise if punitive action entailing loss of Service employment be taken not only against individuals but also against the entire staff of the station or desk concerned'.[81] The foreign staff had a

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[78] CSA, 679(1) 16919, 'Enquiry into corruption in Tientsin Out-door Staff arising out of the R.J. Redd case, 1930', Tianjin dispatch no. 9,072 to IG, 14 January 1930. The person who extorted the bribe would keep thirty per cent and the remainder would be shared amongst the syndicate; Wong reported that each member received on average $200 per month. If a member was dismissed for taking bribes he would receive $3000 compensation from syndicate finds.

[79] CSA, 679(1) 16919, 'Enquiry into corruption in Tientsin Out-door Staff arising out of the R.J. Redd case, 1930',Tianjin Commissioner Howell's report on the investigation, Tianjin dispatch no. 9,089 to IG, 10 February 1930.

[80] CSA, 679(1) 16919, 'Enquiry into corruption in Tientsin Out-door Staff arising out of the R.J. Redd case, 1930', Staff Secretary Prettejohn's report on the investigation, 8 February 1930.

[81] CSA, 679(1) 19143, 'Fraud on Revenue: Messrs. Frazar, Fedeal, Incorporated, Kiaochow', IG circular no. 4,676, 26 July 1933.

duty to detect any underhand dealings on the part of their colleagues, and would collectively face the consequences if they failed.

Those inclined towards corruption remained undeterred, however. If anything, wartime conditions caused malpractice levels to swell; harassed Commissioners struggling to sustain Customs work under wartime conditions were often less vigilant and adverse living conditions persuaded many to add to their incomes through dishonest means. As the foreign staff had been steadily reduced since 1928 most fraud cases in this period involved Chinese perpetrators. Several incidents of malpractice amongst the foreign Outdoor Staff were, however, detected. In 1940, for example, Shanghai Assistant Tidesurveyor Hallums and Boat Officer Popov were charged with stealing revenue moneys during the New Year holiday.[82] The evidence against the pair was uncertain and so both were paid off with benefits rather than dismissed, yet the involvement of two senior foreign Outdoor men in a malpractice case would have undoubtedly worried the Inspectorate.[83] The presence of corruption in the wartime and post-war Service was a particular source of anxiety for Little. At the end of the war he thought it timely to remind staff of the venerable tradition of honesty in the Service, warning that:

> I have noticed a tendency in certain quarters to suggest that, because times are hard and Customs pay low, we should be more lenient in dealing with men who have accepted bribes, falsified accounts, etc., etc. My view is exactly the opposite: it is *because* times are hard and Customs pay low, that we must punish with utmost severity all cases of corruption.[84]

Although the Inspectorate had found it difficult to detect and punish corruption whilst dealing with the pressures of wartime conditions, now the conflict was over there would be no sympathy for those who transgressed. Malpractice, however, remained a consistent problem until the end of the Inspectorate's days, belying its nineteenth-century claim to be eradicating endemic corruption from the customs administration.

On a different note, certain wayward individuals who began their China careers in the Customs turned to more ambitious and daring plots for personal gain,

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[82] CSA, 679(1) 16955, 'Case of theft of revenue moneys, Shanghai, 1940, involving Messrs. M. W. Hallums, E. M. Popov, and others', Shanghai no. 30,664 to IG, 8 April 1940, The money had been placed under the charge of senior Outdoor employees until the reopening of the Customs Bank in the New Year, but went missing in the intervening period.

[83] CSA, 679(1) 16955, 'Case of theft of revenue moneys, Shanghai, 1940, involving Messrs. M. W. Hallums, E. M. Popov, and others', letter from Chief Secretary to Popov, 5 May 1941. Popov was originally paid off without benefits, but Maze eventually relented and allowed him to collect his retirement allowance.

[84] CSA, 679(1) 16100, 'Instructions regarding conduct and discipline of Customs Staff, 1929-49', IG circular letter, Little to K. T. Ting (Deputy IG and Shanghai Commissioner), 4 October 1945.

and sometimes for the sheer adventure of it. Such individuals fell well within the pattern of foreign adventurers and freebooters acting on behalf of rebels or the state in China. Incidents of foreign Customs men becoming embroiled in political or military plots were rare, yet those high-profile exceptions caused considerable embarrassment to the Service, especially considering the self-styled political disinterestedness of the Inspectorate and its staff. Between 1889 and 1891 a British Fourth Assistant stationed in Zhenjiang, Charles 'Welsh' Mason, became involved in a Gelaohui (Elder Brothers Society) plot to stage an uprising at Shashi (Hubei province).[85] In his memoir Mason ascribed to himself—or, what is perhaps more likely, his ghost-writer ascribed to him—a leading role in the conspiracy and declared that his motive in becoming involved in the uprising was to 'make myself King of China'.[86] He also claimed, rather unconvincingly, that the Inspectorate suspected his involvement in the plot from the start—even sending an undercover agent posing as a Customs employee to spy on him—yet through a combination of subterfuge and audacity Mason successfully thwarted Hart's plans to waylay him. In reality, however, Mason's part in the conspiracy was rather less important, being limited to supplying arms to the leaders. The plot was discovered in September 1891 after the weapons were shipped; Mason was arrested, tried in Shanghai, and got off lightly with a sentence of nine months imprisonment issued by the British authorities. Hart was incensed at Mason's behaviour. In a letter to Campbell he explained that 'the affair has done immense harm to Service and self, and the thousand hostilities it has set in motion below the surface are like Mrs. Shelley's Frankenstein—a most horrible combination'.[87]

In another high-profile incident which occurred in 1930, renegade former British Customs employee, Bertram Lenox Simpson, who had resigned in 1901, notorious in treaty port circles as a journalist, polemicist and writer under the penname of Putnam Weale, conspired with rebel forces to seize control of the Tianjin Customs establishment.[88] Northern warlords Yan Xishan and Feng Yuxiang had been engaged

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[85] See Charlton M. Lewis, 'Some Notes on the Ko-lao Hui in Late Ch'ing China' (pp. 97-112) and Guy Puyraimond, 'The Ko-lao Hui and the Anti-Foreign Incidents of 1891' (pp. 113-24), in Chesneaux (ed.), *Popular Movements and Secret Societies*, for a discussion of the Gelaohui's activities and the Mason plot of 1891.

[86] Charles Mason, *The Chinese Confessions of Charles Welsh Mason* (London, 1924), p. 153.

[87] *I.G. in Peking*, vol. 2, letter Z/502, 1 November 1891, p. 864. Hart also reported that the Chinese authorities were furious at Mason's lenient sentence; they 'wanted his head of course!', Hart explained.

[88] See CSA, 679(1) 31640, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, Jan-Aug 1930', confidential letter, Commissioner Hayley-Bell, Tianjin, to Maze, 30 June 1930. Simpson had formerly served in the Customs Indoor Staff between 1896 and 1901.

in protracted negotiations with Nanjing for control of the Tianjin customs revenues for some time, and a forcible takeover had long seemed imminent. Yan and Feng enlisted the support of Simpson, who on 16 June, accompanied by a former American Postal Commissioner in the Customs, L. C. Arlington, who had resigned in 1905, and various Chinese officials, marched on the custom house and presented the Commissioner, Hayley-Bell, with an order removing him from office. Simpson then proceeded to establish his own customs regime in Tianjin, which operated until the Manchurian warlord Zhang Xueliang reclaimed Tianjin in October 1930 and the custom house was returned to the Inspectorate. Simpson himself was assassinated.[89] The implication of two foreign Customs employees in a plot to overthrow the authority of the central government in Tianjin would have undoubtedly caused much anxiety and embarrassment for the Inspectorate considering its insistence that the foreign staff were dedicated servants of China. Furthermore, Simpson and Arlington, once supposedly loyal servants of the Customs, were turning against the Service itself, threatening to undermine its fiercely-guarded integrity.

Politicisation amongst the Chinese Customs staff was clearly on the rise in the twentieth century. As early as 1905, an IG circular cautioned that 'conjoint, combined, and concerted action, more especially when directed against others... is absolutely forbidden'.[90] The Chinese Customs Staff was not entirely detached from the wave of political activism, unionisation and striking which swept the country in the 1920s.[91] After the Nationalist rise to power, moreover, the Inspectorate was forced to grapple with new disciplinary concerns. A 1929 circular, for example, designated 'criticism of superiors or of Government Service matters in the public press, either in interviews or in personal contributions; or in addresses which are public or which may be or are communicated to the public', as an offence punishable by disrating or suspension.[92] During the revolutions and political upheavals of the twentieth century the Inspectorate struggled to maintain an apolitical outlook amongst its staff.

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[89] For an account of the Tianjin Customs seizure see Brunero, *Britain's Imperial Cornerstone in China*, pp. 119-31.
[90] CSA 679(1) 26898, 'IG's circulars, vol. 9, second series, nos. 1,201-1,400, 1905-06', circular no. 1,273, 1 September 1905.
[91] See Jean Chesneaux, *The Chinese Labor Movement, 1919-1927* (Stanford CA, 1968) and Perry, *Shanghai on Strike* for an account of working class political activism in twentieth-century China.
[92] CSA, 679(1) 16100, 'Instructions regarding conduct and discipline of Customs Staff, 1929-49', circular no. 3,899 (second series), 22 April 1929.

On occasion the foreign staff also proved itself capable of political action. The formation of a Customs Outdoor Staff union in Shanghai in 1919 by Chief Examiner H. Wyatt, requesting increased pay, a retirement scheme, higher benefits and more amenable working conditions, is a case in point.[93] Wyatt advised Aglen that 'failure to provide urgent reforms begets discontent and consequent loss to the revenue, whereas, a true regard for the just and equitable treatment of subordinates ensures increased efficiency and loyalty'.[94] Aglen, however, responded nervously to the union's requests, viewing its formation as a personal attack on the IG which implied that he was 'not to be trusted'. Staff requests had no chance of being granted, he asserted, unless they were submitted through the normal channels of Customs communication.[95] Such were Aglen's fears about the seditious nature of the union that he felt compelled to write personally to Wyatt, warning him in rather oblique language that the union would jeopardise the future of the Service:

> I have no intention of allowing you by misplaced activity to pile up the ship. You are not in a position to foresee the consequences of your action nor to understand how exactly it will react on the Service. But I am in a position to do so and I therefore ask you to give it up before you tie yourself and me into a knot which will take some skill in unravelling.[96]

The Fuzhou Commissioner went one step further, labelling the union the 'Shanghai Soviet' and pointing out the 'stupidity and suicidal nature of anything in the way of hostile agitation'.[97] Placed in the global context of the UK police strikes in 1918-19—which perhaps provided some inspiration to the Customs union leaders—and rising fear of communism, dissidence amongst the Customs staff appeared dangerous to some senior employees. Aglen's warnings were to no avail, however, and Wyatt continued to agitate, resulting in his being forced to resign in March 1920.[98] Anti-communism was, of course, becoming part of mainstream Western politics at this

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[93] Other demands included: increased health benefits; seventy-five percent of promotions decided on the basis of seniority and twenty-five percent on capabilities; suitable quarters provided at each port; full passage for self and wife and half passage for children paid by the Service on home leave; permission to view confidential reports and sign them; first home leave after seven years service and henceforth every five years.

[94] CSA, 679(1) 17142, 'Case of Mr. H. Wyatt, Chief Examiner, and formation of Customs Out-door Staff Union, Shanghai, 1919', Shanghai Outdoor Staff Union's circular letter, 8 February 1919. The Harbour, Cruiser and Coast Staffs also attended the union's meetings.

[95] *Documents Illustrative,* vol. III, circular no. 2,912, second series, 8 March 1919.

[96] CSA, 679(1) 17142, Case of Mr. H. Wyatt, Chief Examiner, and formation of Customs Out-door Staff Union, Shanghai, 1919', letter from Aglen to Wyatt, 1 July 1919.

[97] CSA, 679(1) 17142, Case of Mr. H. Wyatt, Chief Examiner, and formation of Customs Out-door Staff Union, Shanghai, 1919', Fuzhou semi-official no. 207 to IG, 14 March 1919.

[98] See CSA, 679(1) 17143, 'Case of Mr. H. Wyatt, Chief Examiner, and formation of Customs Out-door Union at Shanghai, 1919'.

time; SMP investigations into suspected Soviet spies and fears of Bolshevik infiltration in the early 1930s illuminate this growing paranoia in the China coast context.[99] The Foreign Inspectorate was also susceptible to this climate of political mistrust and unionisation therefore carried serious penalties.

Although the majority of the foreign staff were generally trustworthy they were some distance away from being the model of impeccable conduct that the Inspectorate strove for. The consistent presence of a dishonest, irresponsible and violent minority amongst the foreign staff was unsettling for the Inspectorate, threatening to disrupt the entire fiction of Customs integrity. When general or minor misconduct was confined to the low-ranking Outdoor Staff, as it was in the bulk of cases, the situation was worrying but rarely dangerous for the Customs' image, especially in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, however, patterns of malpractice changed considerably. Increased opportunities for appropriating funds, especially in the larger, busier ports, coupled with adverse material conditions caused by war and revolution resulted in a wave of fraud cases. After the Nationalist government came to power the Foreign Inspectorate occupied an increasingly shaky position and was therefore at pains to safeguard its reputation and that of its foreign staff to an unprecedented degree. Considering that the legitimacy of the Foreign Inspectorate's existence was partly based on its claim to be cleansing the customs administration of endemic corruption, any sign of failing or untrustworthiness on the part of foreign employees threatened the authority of the IG and the position of the entire Service.

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[99] See Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, pp. 245-6.

Conclusion

The ever-present misconduct in the Service ranks was partly a result of the latent discontent in the 'outdoor' branches of the Service. Poorly recompensed for their work, consistently under-valued by the Inspectorate and embittered by the Indoor Staff's privileged position, certain Outdoor men experienced few qualms about behaving irresponsibly or even defrauding the revenue, whereas their Indoor counterparts were seldom implicated in misconduct cases.[100] Employees in the 'outdoor' branches of the Service were well aware of the low regard with which they were held in the Inspectorate's eyes and so their commitment to loyal service of the Customs was by no means unshakable. The Inspectorate, however, stubbornly failed to recognise the importance of material benefits to securing staff loyalty and made little effort to improve the circumstances of the 'outdoor' branches.

The problem of misconduct became more trying for the Inspectorate after the late 1920s. Political upheavals, the uncertain future of the foreign staff, increased material hardships, and the growing size and responsibilities of the Service all combined to create an ideal climate in which misconduct and malpractice could flourish. Unfortunately, the 1930s and 1940s, when the privileged position of the IG and his foreign staff was being steadily eroded, was exactly the time when the Customs needed to defend its good image the most fervently. Opportunistic or systematic embezzlement of Customs funds on the part of the foreign staff did nothing to help the Customs' reputation.

The case of the foreign Customs staff sheds more light on the great importance attached to reputation and to the power to control subordinates in colonial administrations across the empire world. The use of British administrative cadres to govern India, Hong Kong or the Sudan was partly justified by the exemplary characters of these services and their personnel. Imperial administrators were considered as an elite, a cut above the average man, who would impart the ways of just and honest government to native officials and populations. As Clive Dewey has observed, ICS officers were viewed by contemporaries as 'hard-working in a

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[100] Henry Lethbridge has noted a similar pattern in the Hong Kong government; although the lower levels of the administration were 'honeycombed with corruption' he argues that this was not the case in the higher levels of the government. Lethbridge, *Stability and Change,* p.230. Munn, however, points out that, although corrupt practices were much more prevalent in the lower levels of the Hong Kong administration, senior officials were also occasionally involved in corruption scandals. See, for example, the cases against Chief Magistrate William Caine, Acting Colonial Secretary W. T. Bridges, and Justice of the Peace Daniel Caldwell in the late 1850s. Munn, *Anglo-China*, p. 292.

debilitating climate, incorruptible in a society riddled with bribery, celibate until middle age in a subcontinent which married at puberty'.[101] Of course, the reality of colonial government was often very different. As Christopher Munn has observed with regard to Hong Kong's early colonial administration, 'the example of good government that had been intended to radiate throughout China was beset with corruption and scandal'.[102] Those individuals whose conduct threatened to undermine the spotless image of imperial administration risked destabilising the entire venture. In the case of the Customs, reputation assumed an even greater significance in view of its answerability to the Chinese government, especially as its semi-autonomy was chipped away at from the 1930s.

Dismissal or discharge from the Service also had devastating personal consequences, which were often overlooked by the Inspectorate. The following year after his discharge from the Service E. M. Popov wrote to the IG protesting that the 'stigma attached to my name' by the circumstances of his withdrawal meant that he could not find work.[103] Similarly, Oliver Hall wrote to the IG begging to be reinstated in 1939 'after six months misery in trying to get employment', as he had no other means of supporting his wife and eight children.[104] Hall's children themselves, wrote heart-rending letters to Maze, informing him that 'next month, if nothing is done we will only have one meal per day' and that 'you don't know how miserable we are'. 'Surely you can forgive and forget?', one of his children asked. Maze refused to reply to these entreaties.[105] Dismissal from the Customs clearly carried serious consequences in the treaty port world. Not only did misconduct endanger the Customs' reputation; it also irreparably damaged the future employment prospects and livelihoods of those responsible. In the wider context of empire these individual cases of personal triumphs and disasters bring to light the human stories of real weight which lay behind colonial caricatures of the Putnam Weale adventurer, the dipsomaniac and the thug, and the upright Customs official.

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[101] Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes*, p. 5.
[102] Munn, *Anglo-China*, p. 325.
[103] CSA, 679(1) 16955, 'Case of theft of revenue moneys, Shanghai, 1940, involving Messrs. M.W. Hallums, E. M. Popov, and others', letter from Popov to Maze, 15 March 1941.
[104] CSA, 679(1) 16953, 'Shanghai fraud case, 1938, involving Messrs. O. Hall, Senior Chief Examiner A and Chang Hsuan, Assistant Examiner A', letter from Hall to Maze, 28 February 1939.
[105] Two of Hall's children wrote letters to Maze asking that their father be reemployed in 1939. See CSA, 679(1) 16953, 'Shanghai fraud case, 1938, involving Messrs. O. Hall, Senior Chief Examiner A and Chang Hsuan, Assistant Examiner A'.

Chapter Four

Social and Private Lives: Reputation and the Off-Duty World of a Customs Man

In *On a Chinese Screen,* a collection of vignettes about the various characters he encountered on his travels in China, Somerset Maugham wrote a brief sketch of the everyday family life of a British Deputy Commissioner and his wife, 'The Fannings', stationed at a tiny and remote riverside port.[1] 'The Fannings' lived in a 'fine square house' in a tiny settlement on the banks of the river. 'The only foreigners in the village besides themselves were the tide-waiters'—both of whom had Chinese wives—Maugham noted, although the only occasions on which the Tidewaiters and the Fannings met socially were when the Deputy Commissioner 'asked them to tiffin on Christmas day and on the King's birthday'. The Fannings had young two sons, aged seven and nine, and Maugham commented on how close-knit the family was, observing that 'though they had so much of one another's society it really looked as though they could not bear to be out of one another's sight'. Soon, however, the boys would have to be sent to school in England, a sad but inevitable occasion for the Fannings who would then be left even more alone. Every evening, for want of any other entertainment, Mr and Mrs Fanning played cards and then listened to the 'latest songs from the musical comedies of London'. 'They lived ten thousand miles away from England and it was their only tie with the home they loved: it made them feel not quite so utterly cut off from civilisation', Maugham explained.

The rather dreary and uneventful social and private life of 'the Fannings' is perhaps representative of the experiences of many Customs men and their families stationed in small ports. This chapter will explore the different social and private worlds inhabited by the foreign staff and the efforts of the Inspectorate to monitor and regulate the off-duty lives of its employees. Although the foreign staff were expected to consider themselves first and foremost as Customs men, the working world of the Service was only part of the experience of living in China and working for the Customs. It was in their off-duty hours that Customs men were granted more freedom to express their individual identities and to pursue their personal interests. Moreover, outside of office hours, when men were seemingly released from the control of their

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[1] W. Somerset Maugham, *On a Chinese Screen* (Oxford, 1985, first edition 1922), 'The Fannings', pp. 124-128.

superiors, their espousal of Customs standards of respectability was most rigorously put to the test.

The colonial world has often been represented as an arena of opportunity for European men, who were apparently effortlessly able to reap the sexual, economic and social rewards which accompanied 'white prestige'.[2] On setting foot in the colonies, so the argument goes, new arrivals would instantly find their status elevated and the social activities available to them transformed. In reality, however, European settlers, expatriates, officials and sojourners in the empire world were rarely allowed an entirely free rein to profit from their enhanced status. The power to exploit these opportunities, granted by virtue of nationality or 'whiteness', was often tightly circumscribed by metropolitan governments, by colonial authorities, by the companies and services which settlers and officials worked for, by the moralising pressures of 'white' colonial society, and by the resistance of colonised populations.[3] The 'empire of opportunity', then, was bounded by a series of official, ideological and social constraints and also by the frequent failures of settlers and sojourners themselves to successfully play the imperialist game.[4]

The example of the Customs foreign staff complicates this reassessment of the 'empire of opportunity' even further. The Inspectorate was always sensitive to its place as a foreign-run institution in China, and social or personal transgressions on the part of its staff could work to de-legitimise its position. From the earliest days of its existence, therefore, the Service attempted to distance its foreign staff from the more unpalatable aspects of foreign society in China. The unique status of Customs men as Chinese government employees meant that they were expected to eschew the less high-minded prejudices of their fellow foreigners. More so than other

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[2] See Ronald Hyam, 'Empire and Sexual Opportunity', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 14 (1986), pp. 34-90, for the argument—rather salaciously presented—that empire presented a world of sexual opportunity to British men. For a forceful critique of Hyam's argument see Mark Berger, 'Imperialism and Sexual Exploitation: A response to Ronald Hyam's "Empire and Sexual Opportunity"', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 17 (1988), pp. 83-9.

[3] See, for example, Lionel Caplan, *Children of Colonialism: Anglo-Indians in a Postcolonial World* (Oxford, 2001), Chapter 3, 'Guarding Boundaries, Crossing Boundaries', pp.59-90 for anxiety about and attempts to police relationships between Anglo-Indian women and European men in colonial India. For the case of the Dutch East Indies and French Indochina see Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*. See Morrison, '"White Todas"', for an analysis of attempts by colonial authorities to curb the economic activities of white planters in the Nilgiri Hills in the former Madras presidency, and the conflicting interests of settlers and officials.

[4] See Eves and Thomas, *Bad Colonists,* for two examples of men whose colonial ambitions singularly failed.

Westerners in China, therefore, the foreign Customs staff were required to curb their inclinations to exploit the social and personal opportunities that China offered to them.

In spite of their difference, however, Customs men *did* have a place within treaty port society. Just as Customs men were mindful of jeopardising their careers through behaviour that was deemed unacceptable by the Inspectorate, neither could they afford to shun wider foreign society if they were to find their place and make their names in China. Customs men, therefore, had to conform to two overlapping, and sometimes competing, sets of behavioural standards: those of the Inspectorate and those of China's foreign communities. The way in which Customs men negotiated these different standards and expectations is a central theme of this chapter.

This chapter, then, will firstly explore the social realms inhabited by Customs employees, looking at their recreational pursuits and what this reveals about social status. Secondly, I will examine the private worlds of Customs employees, looking at the bachelor lifestyles of junior foreign employees, the family lives of older men, and the personal transgressions and difficulties of certain individuals. A central concern will be the efforts made by the Inspectorate to police the off-duty lives of its workers. In a Service where the collective reputation of its staff was key to securing its position in China and in the wider empire world, the personal conduct of foreign employees became a matter for Inspectorate scrutiny and control.

1) Social lives

The treaty port social world

The first step towards socialisation into their new lives for employees recruited in Europe or America took place on the journey to China. Most newly-appointed Customs men would have sailed first to Hong Kong before travelling up the coast to Shanghai, with a minority sailing straight to Shanghai via Japan. On the long voyage new recruits may have been accompanied by experienced Customs men returning from home leave and by men and women with other business in China; in the case of the Indoor Staff—who travelled first class—employees of foreign trading or banking firms, diplomats and consuls, and, in the case of those few Outdoor and Marine employees recruited in London—who travelled second class—policemen, missionaries or working-class settlers. On the voyage the first stirrings of Customs camaraderie could be felt amongst a group of new recruits travelling together, and useful acquaintances could be made from amongst the passengers. Paul King, for example, befriended William Keswick, head of Jardine, Matheson & Co. and an influential figure in China, on the voyage to Hong Kong in 1874.[5] For Willard Straight, sailing from New York to China in 1901, the assortment of passengers aboard his ship mirrored the cosmopolitanism he anticipated finding in the Customs, and in treaty port society more broadly:

> Men in white, in evening dress, in flannels, skull-capped priests, long bearded missionaries and their frowsy wives, ladies from the first cabin, maids from the third, German stewards, Chinese, Singhalese, English, Americans, French, Africans, Arabs, all bickering and bargaining; from the Cockney clerk to the English diplomat, from the seedy French priest to Alexander Agassiz.[6]

For Straight, this scene on board ship in which men and women of diverse national, racial and social origins rubbed shoulders provided an early glimpse of the treaty port world—and the Customs world—where, he imagined, social and racial divisions would be distorted, reordered, and sometimes overridden.

The reality of treaty port life was, of course, very different. China's foreign communities were structured around complex hierarchies based on race, nationality and class, and these status divisions were in some ways even more strictly policed than at home. Many Outdoor men were piqued to find on arrival in China that—in the words of L. C. Arlington—'the Indoor Staff people were treated like Commissars, and

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[5] King, *In the Chinese Customs Service*, p. 14.
[6] Croly, *Willard Straight*, pp. 56-7.

the Outdoor like the proletariat', a situation 'practically resulting in the complete social ostracism of the Outdoor people'.[7] Rasmussen, too, expressed his rancour at the unequal social treatment of Indoor and Outdoor men, remembering how, 'caste among the Europeans, was a reality that no one could escape, and the outdoor staff in the Customs were almost like the untouchables in India, and nearly as low as the Eurasians'.[8] In C. S. Archer's novel, *China Servant,* one character, Chief Tidesurveyor Frost, refused to wear his Outdoor Staff uniform because of the social stigma attached to it. 'His real reason [for not wearing his uniform] was his young wife, a nice young Englishwoman of the worst sort, who lived in a state of thinly concealed shame, because her husband was in the uniformed branch of the service, and her flat was in Kowloon', the narrator explained.[9] Rather than melting into the background, class hierarchies and social snobberies were adjusted, reinforced and even heightened in a Chinese setting.

Treaty port communities were highly self-conscious and self-regulating entities, enforcing a strict code delineating acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Reputation was everything to foreign society, helping to secure and perpetuate the standing of the community and foreign prestige in China. Transgressions of the set standards of behaviour threatened to undermine this. Even the most seemingly insignificant *faux pas* could result in the social death of a person who paid no heed to these conventions. In 1932, for example, the Canton Commissioner reported the resignation of Second Assistant A, H. E. Jackson, whose behaviour and appearance had apparently offended the delicate sensibilities of Canton's foreign society:

> If he stays on, I suggest that he should be transferred. He made a bad start here, socially I mean, and will find it very hard to live it down. Another suggestion I have to make is that an elderly woman should advise him to dress more quietly! Clothes do not make a man, I know, but they can unmake him and Jackson's are the cause of most of his troubles![10]

Eccentricities were evidently not tolerated in influential treaty port circles and acceptance into 'respectable' society came at the price of social conformity.

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[7] Arlington, *Through the Dragon's Eyes*, p. 121.
[8] Rasmussen, *China Trader*, p. 3. Rasmussen experienced a sudden leap in status when he left the Customs after five years to work for a foreign firm starting up operations in Zhenjiang. His new job meant 'a tremendous change' for Rasmussen meaning, in his words, that 'I suddenly found myself in the merchant class' (p. 77).
[9] Archer, *China Servant*, p. 24.
[10] CSA, 679(1) 31643, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1931-2', confidential letter, Canton Commissioner to IG Maze, 15 March 1932.

Jackson's social death was not irreversible, however, and he went on to enjoy a long career in the Customs, only leaving in December 1941.

To avoid potentially embarrassing incidents such as that which befell Jackson, all new foreign arrivals, including Customs men, needed to be taught the rules of their new society and to find their place within it. This was typically done through an assortment of social institutions and organisations, which were replicated in ports throughout China and, indeed, throughout the empire world. The standard social repertoire of clubs, churches, Masonic lodges, volunteer corps, sporting teams and events, and 'calling' on other members of the foreign community, which structured the social lives of foreigners in the treaty ports, could be found empire-wide. The club was the most firmly-rooted feature on the social landscape of the larger foreign communities throughout empire, serving a practical purpose of providing a site of social contact in a society where women were a minority and family life was disrupted by long periods of separation.[11] China was no different in this respect. Clubs, however, were by no means egalitarian institutions and Outdoor men would have found that the doors of the most prestigious and status-conscious, such as the British Shanghai Club, were barred to men of their social standing. As Robert Bickers has observed, 'clubs put people in place according to their nationality, race, class, or sex.'[12]

For foreign Assistants, who were the 'respectable' public face of the Customs, mixing with other well-regarded foreigners in the club during their ample leisure hours was almost obligatory. Paul King recounted how his off-duty hours in nineteenth-century Swatow were largely spent in the prestigious Masu Retreat Club.[13] J. O. P. Bland remarked that, 'for all the risks to which a sociably inclined griffin is exposed in China, there is, I believe, none that is responsible for more tombstones than that which lurks in the contagious conviviality of the cocktail and peg hours'. Although—as Bland pointed out—the pay of a newly-arrived Fourth Assistant B did not stretch very far when it came to time spent in the club, it was easy enough for Customs men to sign a chit and pay for their drinks on credit.[14] The club, then, helped

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[11] John Butcher argues that European clubs were ubiquitous in Malaya for this reason, providing a social substitute for domestic and family life. *The British in Malaya,* pp. 147-57.
[12] Bickers, *Britain in China,* p. 83. Butcher has also observed how European clubs in Malaya served to maintain class distinctions within European society, with low-status Europeans such as train drivers and jockeys being barred from membership of the more prestigious clubs.
[13] King, *In the Chinese Customs Service*, p. 28.
[14] J. O. P. Bland, unpublished memoir, Chapter Two, 'Hankow in the Eighties,' p. 5-6.

newcomers to the Indoor Staff to ground themselves in the treaty port environment and remained the focal point of recreational activities for the remainder of their years in China.

Socialisation into the treaty port foreign world structured around the club had its limits for Customs employees. The Inspectorate, too, expected certain behavioural standards from its staff—which were in some respects different to those of the wider foreign community—and it therefore experienced considerable unease about the ill-effects of mixing too often in non-Customs circles. In his famous 1864 circular outlining the guiding principles of the Service Hart cautioned:

> Whatever other Foreigners resident in this country may deem themselves entitled to do, whether from their position, or fancied superiority to the Chinese, or in the way of showing their superior enlightenment by riding rough-shod over prejudices, and by evincing a general contempt for customs differing from their own, it is to be expected from those who take the pay, and are the servants of the Chinese Government, that they, at least, will so act as to neither offend susceptibilities, nor excite jealousies, suspicion, and dislike.[15]

Whilst new recruits *were* expected to integrate to some extent with the foreign expatriate, diplomatic and settler communities in China, they were also made aware that they occupied a very different place in China from other foreigners and that they needed to act accordingly.

The Inspectorate's suggestion that Customs men should distance themselves from the wider foreign community was, however, ambivalently received at best. Limited social opportunities in the smaller ports accelerated the development of camaraderie between all foreigners, Customs and non-Customs alike. Paul King, for example, described how in his first posting at Swatow there were 'very few moral restraints *plus* a good deal of comradeship of an international nature, for in those days all white men on the coast held together and sank their separatist tendency'.[16] For high-ranking Indoor employees, moreover, attendance at the principal foreign club in their port was often a necessary part of their working duties. A visit to the club kept Commissioners *au fait* with political and economic affairs in the port, and also provided an atmosphere of masculine conviviality in which disputes could be settled with foreign merchants and officials. In 1922, for example, the Shanghai Commissioner, Lowder, complained about his lack of freedom to leave the office, claiming that:

> If the Commissioner is to keep in touch with the public, as he undoubtedly should do, by going to the Shanghai Club at noon, and if he is to be free to make a proper

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[15] *Documents Illustrative*, vol. I, circular no. 8 of 1864 (first series), p. 36.
[16] King, *In the Chinese Customs Service*, p. 18.

> showing at public functions—as he also undoubtedly should do for the sake of the prestige of the Service—it is necessary that he should be able to leave his office at any time.

In a margin note Aglen asked, 'is this necessary?' The Staff Secretary affirmed: 'yes, strange as it may sound. Between 12.30 and 1 o'clock all the Taipans and several consuls look in at the Club and very often important questions can be settled or vexatious controversies avoided by a friendly word said at the right moment'.[17] Putting in an appearance at 'respectable' social gatherings and mixing with prominent members of Shanghai's foreign society, and thereby maintaining the public presence and image of the Customs, were essential professional duties for Commissioners.

Needless to say, the social experiences of Customs men much depended on where they were posted, and the year in which they joined. Nothing served to dampen the spirits of new recruits more than a posting to a small outport, where social life was at best dull and at worst non-existent, especially in the nineteenth century when China's nascent communities were only just beginning to take root. Edward Bowra, who joined the Indoor Staff in 1863, was bitterly disappointed to find himself transferred to Tianjin on his arrival in China, a port which had only been opened to foreign trade and residence two years previously, describing his new home as 'a dirty little hole of a town, with about six Europeans and a hostile population of half a million'.[18] In the nineteenth century, moreover, even Shanghai, the city which featured most vividly in the foreign imagination as an arena of social opportunity, was sorely lacking in social charms. Reflecting on his year in Shanghai 1888-9 Bland observed that:

> Compared to the sky-scraping and nerve-shattering city of today, the Shanghai of the eighties was an unsophisticated Country Cousin. The foreign community was still small enough for everyone to know everybody else, at least by sight, and its social functions, with a boundary line of fashion firmly drawn between the Bubbling Well and Hongkew, were in the nature of family parties.[19]

Nanjing's social landscape was even more desolate according to Willard Straight, who was posted there for language training in 1901:

> Social life there is none—absolutely none. An occasional dinner at the Commissioner's, tiffin now and then of a Sunday with some of the few foreigners at the Naval College or the Military Academy, or most wonderful of all, a musical at a missionary's, are the only gaieties. After that it is merely a great barren sameness, a desert of Chinese character with tiffin and dinner and tea and an afternoon walk as the little green spots make life bearable.[20]

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[17] CSA, 679(1) 17616, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Shanghai, 1901-48', Shanghai dispatch no. 17,690, handing-over-charge memo, Commissioner Lowder to Commissioner Holwill, 17 April 1922.
[18] Edward Bowra, quoted in Charles Drage, *Servants of the Dragon Throne: Being the Lives of Edward and Cecil Bowra* (London, 1966), p. 65.
[19] J. O. P. Bland, unpublished memoir, Chapter Six, p. 1.
[20] Quoted in Croly, *Willard Straight*, p. 63.

To make the best of a bad situation Customs men—like twentieth-century DOs posted to one-man stations in Africa[21]—could always make their own entertainment, which often took the form of amateur dramatics and musical events (see *Figure 4.1*). Taken together with frequent rides and hunting trips and with occasional teas and dinners hosted by prominent members of the resident foreign community (see *Figure 4.2*), small port life could be made bearable.

Straight happily found a year later that social life in Peking was considerably more entertaining, if only because of Hart's famous, and sometimes rather eccentric, dinner parties. 'Here one sees a truly characteristic show', Straight commented, 'for it is absolutely international'. The programme for these dinners—which were 'the most interesting functions in Peking society'— was followed with military precision each week, and Hart expected high social standards from all of his guests, especially when it came to dancing. 'Woe betide the Customs youngster who may be asked to dance vis-à-vis, if he doesn't know the figures', warned Straight.[22] Bland, a contemporary of Straight in Peking, also reminisced nostalgically about Hart's dinner and garden parties and dances, which were colourful and unpredictable events, often featuring amateur dramatics and once a 'semi-acrobatic pas de deux'.[23]

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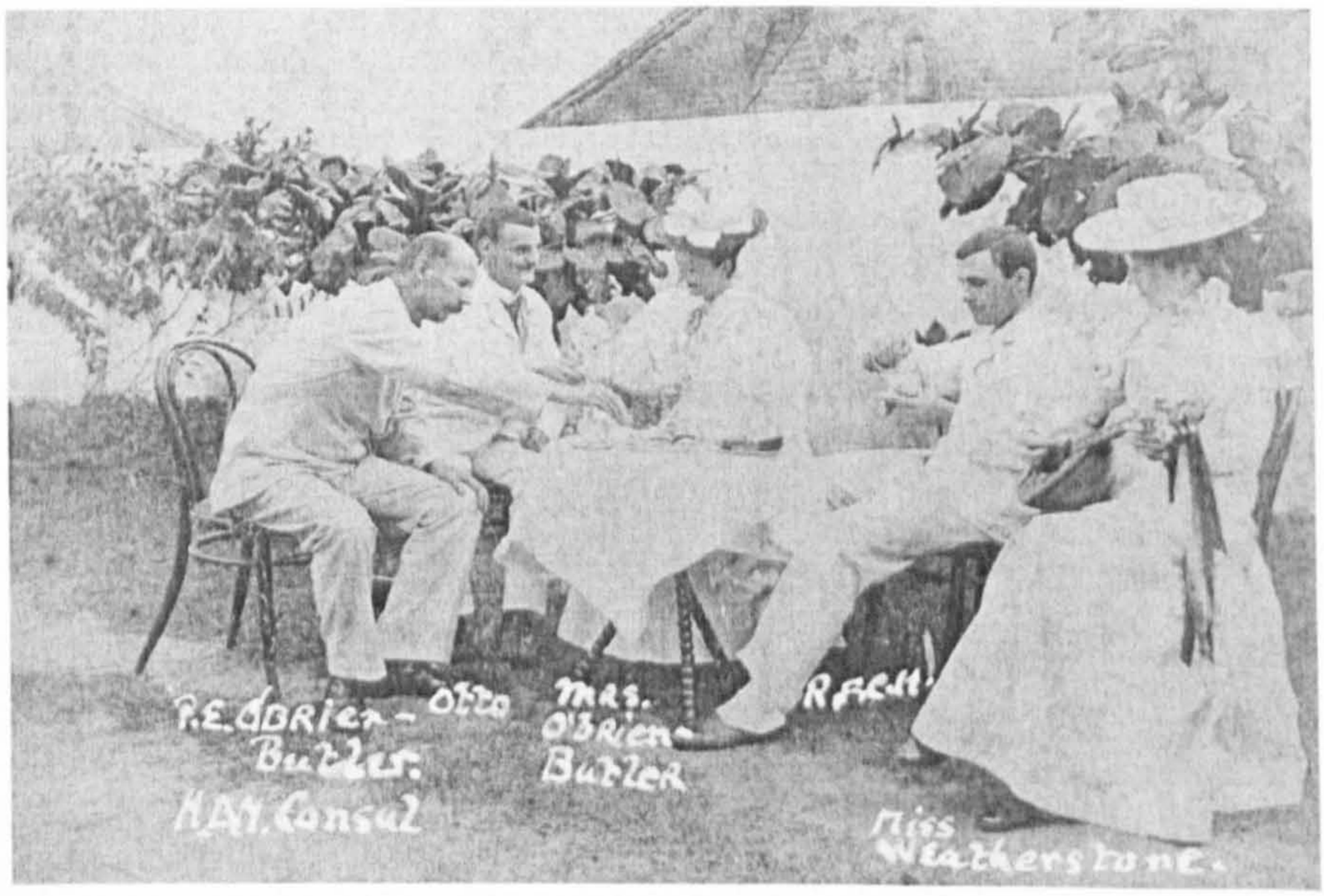
[21] See Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of Authority*, Chapter Eight, 'After the Day's Work', pp. 164-79. Kirk-Greene describes how DOs in small stations were required to be inventive when it came to entertainment, often taking up such solitary hobbies as mountaineering, bird-watching and writing.
[22] Quoted in Croly, *Willard, Straight*, p. 88-9.
[23] J. O. P. Bland, unpublished memoir, Chapter Five, 'Under Hart at Peking', p. 14-15. The acrobatic show in question was, according to Bland, deemed indecent by the diplomatic community in Peking, and was considered all the more scandalous due to the fact that the female performer was Hart's current 'favourite' amongst the legation women.

Figure 4.1

Programme for an Assistants' musical evening, Nanjing, 1902

Figure 4.2



R. F. C. Hedgeland (second from right) taking tea with the British consul and friends, Haikou (Hoihow), Hainan Island, 1898[24]

Upscale soirees hosted by elite treaty port characters as described by Straight and Bland were strictly off-bounds to Outdoor men, narrowing their social

[24] Photographs taken from SOAS, PP MS 82/13, Hedgeland papers box 3. The photograph in the top right hand corner of *Figure 4.2* is of Willard Straight and that in the bottom right hand corner is of future IG Francis Aglen.

opportunities further. In some respects, however, the low status of Outdoor men could work to their advantage. As the informal nightlife scene in the larger treaty ports, and especially in Shanghai, became ever more colourful in the twentieth century, Outdoor men were able to enjoy the cabarets and nightclub entertainments on offer to them with more freedom than their Indoor counterparts, who had their good reputations to consider. Former Outdoor employee C. E. Temlett, who arrived in Shanghai in 1925, described how a typical night on the town for junior Outdoor men would begin with a few drinks and a trip to the cinema, followed by several hours of dancing and drinking in one of Shanghai's numerous cabarets.[25] Yet, although the social scene in the larger treaty ports livened up considerably in the twentieth century, life in the outports remained a dreary experience. On his arrival in Zhenjiang in 1905 Outdoor man Rasmussen, after surveying the foreign concession with its three streets, thirty-five foreign inhabitants and two Customs clubs, claimed that 'a cold fear gripped me at the prospects of a long stay'. After a few months of enduring Zhenjiang's limited social offerings the pressures of living in a small and insular community began to tell. 'In a small place like Chinkiang [Zhenjiang] where nothing ever happened and boredom laid its heavy hand on the little community thrown together in a confined space, with absolutely no amusements or diversions, strange things happen to the individual', Rasmussen commented darkly.[26]

Even in the smallest ports, however, there was always the prospect of riding or a shooting trip to relieve the boredom. Although they were relegated to one of the lowest positions in the hierarchy of foreign society, Outdoor men were paradoxically able to pursue a range of quintessentially upper class leisure activities. Rasmussen recounted how *all* foreign men in his port owned a gun and a dog, making the most of the autumn snipe shooting season and also enjoying occasional weekend boar-hunting breaks. Despite his obvious low status in Zhenjiang's society, Rasmussen—who claimed that 'riding was a very inexpensive hobby'—also owned a 'small mare' and a spirited stallion (named Satan) complete with groom.[27] Whereas hunting and riding would have been strictly off-limits for men of their socio-economic status in their home countries, in China Outdoor men had the opportunity, the leisure time and enough money to pursue a range of elite sports.

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[25] Interview with C. E. Temlett, BBC, 'Lion and the Dragon'.
[26] Rasmussen, *China Trader*, p. 27.
[27] Rasmussen, *China Trader*, p. 26 and pp. 44-7. See pp. 49-65 for Rasmussen's accounts of pig-shooting expeditions.

Hunting and riding were also popular Indoor Staff pursuits (see *Figures 4.3* and *4.4*), as they were for administrative employees posted to isolated stations elsewhere in empire.[28] Straight took pride in his dedication to a schedule of early morning rides whilst stationed in Nanjing, as did Edward Bowra. In a letter home in 1864 Bowra wrote with bravado that 'at 5 my horse is saddled and waiting and away I go for a scamper across country, astonishing the weak minds of the English students by leaping everything in my way and beating them as easily on horseback as I do at Chinese'.[29] For Bowra, riding was essentially a character-building pursuit—and also an activity which demonstrated his athletic superiority over his peers—and was principally about rising early and sticking to a regime of clean, hard living. Riding and hunting were, moreover, explicitly linked with the colonial endeavour in the popular British imagination. Bowra's feats on horseback were also perhaps intended to speak of his effortless mastery of the Chinese landscape, a recurrent theme in both Western travel writing about the non-European world and colonialist discourse.[30] Hunting, too, was sometimes clearly linked to colonial expansion. John Mackenzie, for example, has shown how hunting was a key point of contact between Africans and Europeans in the late-nineteenth-century, and was transformed from a food-gathering task into a sporting and imperialistic endeavour by Europeans in the early colonial period.[31] Although stationed in China rather than a formal colony, Customs men replicated with ease the leisure pursuits and sporting discourses common to Western expansion and travel throughout the non-Western world.

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[28] See Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of Authority*, Chapter Eight, 'After the Day's Work', pp. 164-79, for examples of the solitary sporting pursuits of lonely British DOs in Africa.
[29] SOAS, MS 201813, Bowra papers, box 3, letter from Edward Bowra to his mother, Peking, 20 October 1864.
[30] Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes*, for example, has stressed the intimate connection between travel writing and colonial discourse in respect to representations of conquering the non-European landscape. Also see Glenn Hooper (ed.), *Landscape and Empire, 1770-2000* (Aldershot, 2005).
[31] John Mackenzie, 'Hunting in Eastern and Central Africa in the Late Nineteenth Century, with special reference to Zimbabwe', in William J. Baker and James A. Mangan (eds.), *Sport in Africa: Essays in Social History* (London, 1987), pp. 172-95.

Figure 4.3

A Customs shooting party at Haikou (Hoihow), Hainan Island, 1898

Figure 4.4

R. F. C. Hedgeland and his pony, 'Prince Henry', Nanjing, 1900 [32]

Other types of sporting activities—and particularly team sports—proved useful vehicles for fostering solidarity amongst foreign men in the treaty port world. Cricket was popular, as were swimming, boxing and horse-racing, and there were endless tennis matches to be played in even the smallest outports.[33] Foreign-staffed

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[32] Photograph taken from SOAS, PP MS 82/13, Hedgeland papers, box 3.

[33] See Bickers, *Britain in China,* p. 84, for a discussion of sport in Shanghai. See also, Frances Wood, *No Dogs and not Many Chinese: Treaty Port Life in China* (London, 1998), pp. 120-3, for sporting life

organisations in China often founded their own sporting teams; the SMP, for example, had its own rugby and football teams and a cricket eleven.[34] Moreover, the 'games ethic', to use J. A. Mangan's term, fostered by the British public school system was of particular importance when selecting colonial administrators. To the selection boards of colonial civil services athleticism automatically denoted leadership, good judgement, physical robustness, self-discipline and initiative—in other words a 'good character'.[35] Athleticism as taught by the public schools system was, therefore, integral to the 'moral imperative' of imperialism, diffusing values of fair play, team loyalty and self-reliance throughout the empire.[36] Although Customs men were employees of the Chinese government as opposed to imperial administrators, many foreign employees sought to replicate this athletic ideal and the moralistic and character-building principles which lay behind it.

On a more practical level, organised sports helped to while away the time in a small port and also brought a taste of home to China. Paul King forged a particularly sporty path in the Customs, fondly reminiscing about cricket matches in Swatow, playing golf on the bed of the Yangzi River, rowing in Shanghai, and organising a Customs 'gym' in Jiujiang and boxing clubs in Shanghai and Tianjin.[37] Perry Anderson also noted how the dominant theme of his father, James Seymour Anderson's, correspondence from his early years in the Indoor Staff was 'the pleasures of an outdoor life—riding, skating, tennis, swimming'.[38] For Bland, occasional cricket matches, canoeing and snipe shooting were the only events which alleviated the 'aggrieved boredom' of the Customs mess in nineteenth-century Canton.[39] In terms of the range of sporting activities available to its employees, the

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in the treaty ports. For an analysis of the importance of cricket in empire see Mike Cronin and Richard Holt, 'The Imperial Game in Crisis: English Cricket and Decolonisation', in Stuart Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester, 2001), pp. 111-27. Cronin and Holt argue that cricket was essential to British identity in the empire world: 'The world of cricket was often presented as a microcosm of England itself—and more widely of the British Empire—where social order and prosperity were guaranteed by enlightened patrician government', they argue (p. 112).

[34] Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, p. 137. On team sports and empire see Patrick F. McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935* (Basingstoke, 2004).

[35] See Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism.* Also see Anthony Kirk-Greene, 'Imperial Administration and the Athletic Imperative: The Case of the District Officer in Africa', in Baker and Mangan (eds.), *Sport in Africa,* pp. 81-113.

[36] Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism*, p. 19.

[37] King, *In the Chinese Customs Service,* p. 25, p. 188-9, p. 62, p. 65 and p. 80. See McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win,* Chapter Four, 'May the Best White Man Win: Boxing, Race, and Masculinity,' pp. 58-80, for an analysis of the culture of boxing in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century empire world.

[38] Anderson, 'A Belated Encounter', p. 3.

[39] J. O. P. Bland, unpublished memoir, Chapter Four, 'Canton', p. 2.

athletic world of the Customs was at once typically British, typical of empire and intensely masculine.

Frequent sojourns to the countryside, the mountains or the seaside also punctuated the boredom of life in the smaller treaty ports, and provided respite the harsh summer climate in some ports, which was believed to have a debilitating effect on European physical and mental health.[40] Annual holidays in mountain resorts modelled on the hill-stations of the Raj, such as Beijing's Western Hills and Chengdu's Bailuding, and at twentieth-century seaside resorts such as Qingdao and Weihaiwei were a regular feature of foreign life in China, and were especially popular with (and affordable to) the Indoor Staff.[41] Dane Kennedy has pointed to the functional role played by hill stations in colonial India, providing sites in which young adults could meet and marry, children were born and educated, and political and military policy could be decided upon. Hill stations, moreover, 'in effect, served as both sites of refuge and sites for surveillance', operating as oases of Englishness, providing relief from the 'social and psychological toll of an alien culture', and as posts from which the British ruled their subjects.[42]

Although popular holiday sites in China were not politically, militarily and socially integral to the running of informal empire in China as they were to the operation of the Raj, holidays were nonetheless an important date on the social calendar for foreigners in China. Furthermore, like Indian hill stations, holidays in China also had a regulatory function, creating seasonal foreign enclaves which provided respite and created distance from what were considered by foreign society as the detrimental effects of Chinese culture. Weekend breaks in the country were also popular, and Rasmussen often found reprieve from the tedium of life in Zhenjiang by spending weekends at the 'community shooting bungalow' eight miles outside the port; 'When the Concession really got me down I "lifted up mine eyes unto the hills"

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[40] John Butcher points to the importance of hill stations in colonial Malaya, which, in a time when a hot and humid climate was thought to have deleterious effects on the health of Europeans who spent too much time in the tropics, provided periodic respite from the heat of the lowlands. *The British in Malaya,* pp. 68-73 and pp. 157-66.

[41] A student interpreter for the consular service, W. H. Wilkinson, for example, painted an idyllic picture of summers spent in the Western Hills near Beijing in the late nineteenth century, staying in picturesque temples and occasionally riding down to the city to do a week's work. *"Where Chineses Drive": English Student-Life in Peking by a Student Interpreter* [W. H. Wilkinson] (London, 1885), Chapter Six, 'At the Hills', pp. 197-234.

[42] Kennedy, *Magic Mountains,* p. 1 and 'Introduction', pp. 1-18.

and got new strength from them', Rasmussen recalled.[43] Some would also take their annual holidays in more far-flung locations such as Japan, a destination which was attractive to many foreign men chiefly because of its difference from China, its perceived 'cleanliness', and the sexual opportunities it offered. J. O. P. Bland's first visit to Japan in 1886— intended to help him recuperate from malaria—was a 'delectable joyride' of two months, and the country's people, culture and scenery, full of 'visions of unforgettable loveliness', left a much more gratifying impression on him than did China.[44] Although China often fell disappointingly short of expectations of Far Eastern exoticism for Customs men, Japan certainly did not.

In spite of the frequent circulars issued by the Inspectorate to its foreign staff reminding them that they were employees of the Chinese government and needed to act appropriately towards their Chinese colleagues, little socialising between the foreign staff and Chinese colleagues or acquaintances took place. Foreign communities studiously maintained an appropriate distance from Chinese society and culture, and most Customs men had no desire to alienate themselves by crossing this most deeply entrenched social divide. Foreign Customs men, moreover, usually felt they had more cultural affinities with the foreign community and therefore naturally gravitated towards them when it came to socialising. Paul King placed himself squarely within Swatow's foreign society, remarking that 'the foreign community in Swatow had little to do with the local Chinese of good standing, and, as a matter of fact, there were not very many Chinese of good standing resident in the place'.[45] Rasmussen, too, although equally scornful of Zhenjiang's foreign community, was loath to make any Chinese social contacts.[46] L. C. Arlington, although himself lacking in Chinese social acquaintances, was harshly critical about the Service's attitude towards the Chinese who, he claimed, 'were treated as aliens in their own

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[43] Rasmussen, *China Trader*, p. 49. L. C. Arlington also reminisced about holidays staying at the Customs bungalow at 'Chutzulin' when stationed at Zhenjiang in 1889. His memories were less favourable than Rasmussen's, however, claiming that such holidays were often marred by the presence of 'local bullies' in the foreign community. See Arlington, *Through the Dragon's Eyes*, p.130. In 1937 the Samshui Commissioner, Petterson, pleaded with the Staff Secretary to allow him to spend weekends away from his posting; as he was the only foreigner in the port it was essential to his sanity that he spend time away from Samshui, he argued. Hu was, however, unsympathetic and ruled that Petterson must remain at his port. CSA, 679(1) 14237, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1937: Kiungchow-Santuao', confidential letter, Staff Secretary Hu to Commissioner Petterson, Samshui, 6 January 1937.

[44] J. O. P. Bland, unpublished memoir, Chapter Three, 'Japan in the Eighties', p. 8.

[45] King, *In the Chinese Customs Service*, p. 37.

[46] Rasmussen, *China Trader*, p. 73. Rasmussen, in the style of other contemporary commentators on the Chinese 'character', also puzzled over the 'everlasting riddle of the Chinese mind' (pp. 73-4).

country!'[47] Although Commissioners were expected to occasionally socialise formally with Chinese officials as part of their work, and some made a career out of their connections with the Chinese political elite, the majority of Customs employees showed no inclination to spend their off-duty hours with Chinese acquaintances, and neither were Chinese particularly eager to befriend foreign Customs men. For the most part, then, the Chinese and foreign social worlds remained separate and distinct.

The Customs social world

Running parallel to the treaty port social *milieu* there existed a specifically Customs social world in the form of staff clubs. Concerned about the damaging effects of foreign society on the mindset and reputation of its employees, and anxious to distance its staff from the more insalubrious pleasures of the treaty port social world, the Inspectorate was all too happy to sanction the formation of recreational clubs in response to staff requests from the 1880s.[48] Clubs, moreover, would prove invaluable vehicles through which to foster the development of camaraderie amongst employees. Customs clubs began to be formed in the larger ports in the late nineteenth century, and their numbers grew rapidly in the twentieth century, although they did not become standard features of the Customs topography until the 1920s. These clubs, and the libraries which usually accompanied them, provided much-needed recreational facilities in small ports and also enabled the Inspectorate to monitor the social activities of its employees and contain them within a distinctive Customs environment. Such clubs—which were usually run by a committee according to rules approved by the IG and which were financed partly by the Inspectorate and partly by membership dues— evolved to become fixtures of the Customs social world and on the treaty port scene. For most staff the Customs club was an accessible, affordable and informal form of socialising which enabled a man to get to know his colleagues in a friendly and familiar environment. (see *Figure 4.5*).

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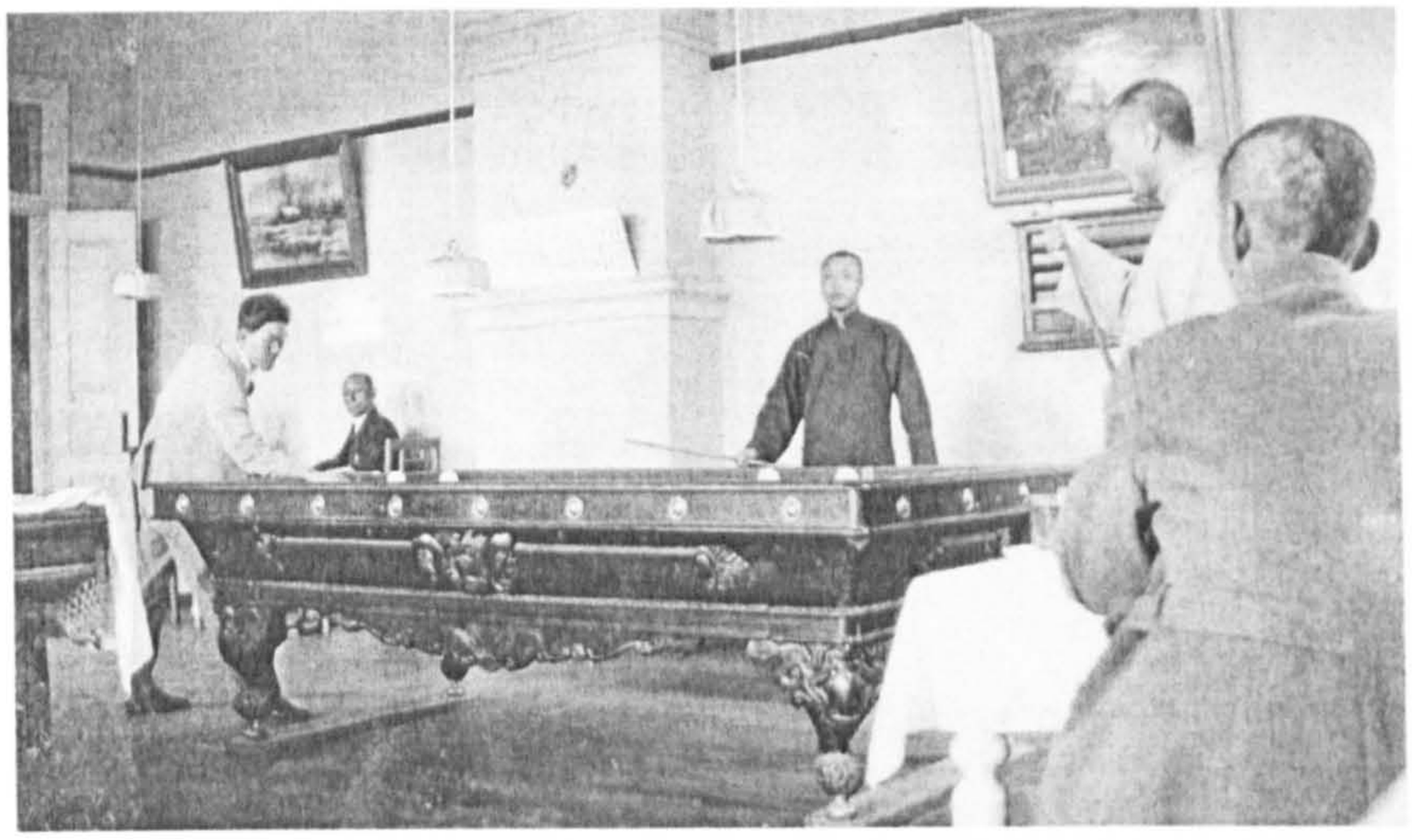
[47] Arlington, *Through the Dragon's Eyes*, p. 123.

[48] An early example of a staff request for a Customs club was submitted in 1881 when the Swatow staff petitioned to found a billiards club paid for by member subscriptions, which would be open to all Customs employees. CSA, 679(2) 1867, 'Swatow Customs: dispatches and enclosures to IG, 1878-91', Swatow dispatch no. 52, 24 April 1881.

Figure 4.5



Men playing billiards at the Taiheiho Customs club, 1925 [49]

Customs clubs also served to protect the reputation of the staff—and by implication the Foreign Inspectorate as a whole—by providing a respectable diversion from the more unsavoury social opportunities on offer in the treaty ports. For the Antung Commissioner in 1910, for example, the formation of a Customs club at his port was a pressing matter. 'There is in the port absolutely no place where our men can find healthy recreation', the Commissioner complained, adding that 'the prominence of the most undesirable forms of amusement is such in this place that every counteracting influence possible should be striven for'.[50] Concern with Customs respectability and with distancing staff from the temptations of treaty port society ran through much of the correspondence debating the use and location of Customs clubs. In 1911 the Shanghai Commissioner informed the IG of the 'desirability of moving both club and quarters into a better neighbourhood', basing his recommendation on 'the presence of numerous brothels in the immediate vicinity of the present club'.[51] Unfortunately, however, no suitable alternative quarters could be found. A preoccupation with promoting proper and 'respectable' behaviour also manifested itself in club rules, which invariably prohibited gambling and enforced strict opening times.[52] For the Inspectorate, Customs clubs were viewed as

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[49] Photograph taken from SOAS, PP MS 82, Hedgeland papers.
[50] CSA, 679(1) 17062, 'Chinese and foreign staff clubs, Antung', Antung dispatch no. 626, 15 June 1910. The Commissioner was duly granted permission to go ahead with the club plans.
[51] CSA, 679(1) 17084, 'Customs clubs, Shanghai', Shanghai dispatch no. 11,707, Commissioner Merrill, Shanghai, to IG Aglen, 22 August 1911.
[52] See, for example, CSA, 679(1) 17062, 'Chinese and foreign staff clubs, Antung', Customs club rules enclosed in Antung dispatch no. 626, 15 June 1910.

sanctuaries which held the dangers and temptations lurking outside the boundaries of the Custom house at bay.

Like their opposite numbers in the foreign community, Customs clubs explicitly reinforced social boundaries of class and race. Although Chinese employees were not expressly forbade from using the foreign staff club, until the 1940s separate clubs were established for both the foreign and the Chinese staff. Until the 1920s Chinese employees were usually appointed to a custom house within their home town or province, meaning that they had a pre-established range of social contacts and activities on joining the Service. Chinese employees, moreover, were often married and had more pressing family responsibilities than their foreign colleagues. These combined circumstances meant that Chinese employees were less inclined to spend their evenings in the club. As the numbers of Chinese staff increased and began to be transferred more regularly, however, this situation changed. In 1922 the Chinese staff based at the Peking Inspectorate, led by a linguist named Charles Leung originally from Guangdong province, requested that a Chinese staff club be formed. 'The need for such an establishment has never been so keenly felt before, as it is now, for in former times the Chinese Indoor Staff was only limited to a few Writers and Copyists who are mostly natives of Peking', Leung explained. 'With the growth of the Linguists Staff appointed at the Inspectorate from various parts of the country', however, 'it has now become more or less a matter of necessity for us to have a suitable place for recreation, social intercourse, and intellectual development after office hours'.[53] Chinese staff clubs, although run along much the same lines as foreign clubs, also offered more family-oriented amenities—the Shanghai Chinese staff club, for example, provided a dining room and baths for employees and their families—and usually did not serve alcohol.[54] Chinese and foreign staff clubs served different interests and their separation was, therefore, in some respects a very practical policy. Maintaining the exclusivity of the foreign social world, however, also served to bolster foreign prestige in the Service, and was in keeping with empire-wide trends of racial segregation in a social context. Of course, as the numbers of foreign employees dwindled in the 1930s and 1940s and foreign privilege in the Service was

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[53] CSA, 679(1) 17085, 'Chinese staff club, Shanghai, 1922-46', letter from Charles Leung on behalf of the Inspectorate's Chinese staff, to IG Aglen, 8 July 1922. In 1928 the Peking Chinese Indoor Staff club moved to Shanghai along with the Inspectorate and in 1931 the Inspectorate staff club amalgamated with the Shanghai Chinese Indoor Staff club.

[54] CSA, 679(1) 17085, 'Chinese staff club, Shanghai, 1922-46', Shanghai Chinese Indoor Staff club rules, 1931.

eroded maintaining foreigner-only Customs clubs became untenable; the merging of the foreign and Chinese social worlds became the only viable option.[55]

Class divisions were also entrenched in the Customs social world; the Indoor and 'outdoor' branches spent their leisure hours in separate Customs clubs, even in the tiniest ports.[56] In Zhenjiang, with its foreign community of only thirty-five, Rasmussen reported that two clubs were established; 'one for the outdoor staff and one for the Consul, the indoor staff and the merchants'.[57] Such was the animosity between the Indoor and Outdoor branches, that most Outdoor men were quite happy to socialise separately. In fact, they resisted any infringement upon their club facilities by their Indoor colleagues, who Outdoor men considered enjoyed enough privileges in the treaty port world as it stood. Resentment towards Indoor use of the Customs library in Swatow, which was funded by an annual Inspectorate grant intended for stocking Outdoor Staff libraries, reached a head in 1884 when it was proposed that an Indoor man be appointed to the library management committee.[58] One man in particular, Assistant Examiner Dubarry, 'thought it fit to embody his opposition in the species of a war-dance', claiming that library management should lie with the Outdoor Staff and protesting that Indoor men were apt to break the library rules by stealing newspapers. A few days later a library meeting was engineered without the knowledge of the Indoor Staff, thereby thwarting plans to appoint an Indoor committee member. The Commissioner, Colin Jamieson, was furious, declaring the meeting invalid and personally appointing an Indoor man to the committee. For Jamieson, this was above all a point of principle; he admitted that 'it is a matter of little moment to the Indoor Staff whether or not they belong to the Library', yet argued that 'it is well to maintain this library "point of contact" between the two staffs'.[59] Dubarry was subsequently issued with a warning and the matter was dropped without further incident, although Hart noted disapprovingly that 'too much

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[55] See, for example, CSA, 679(1) 17097, 'Customs club, Swatow', Swatow dispatch no. 8,008, 6 October 1942, notifying the IG that the foreign and Chinese clubs had been amalgamated.
[56] The Marine Staff were more likely to do their socialising on board ship and were granted a 'wine allowance' for this purpose.
[57] Rasmussen, *China Trader*, p. 12.
[58] CSA, 679(2) 1869, 'Swatow Customs: dispatches to IG, 1884-86', Swatow dispatch no. 9,120 September 1884. Until 1882 an Indoor employee had always been included on the library committee, although none had been elected for the past two years. Therefore, the Commissioner argued, the library 'has always been a general staff—and not exclusively an Outdoor—institution'.
[59] CSA, 679(2) 1869, 'Swatow Customs: dispatches to IG, 1884-1886', Swatow dispatch no. 9,227 September 1884. Jamieson also noted with satisfaction that 'it would have been inadvisable to show other than a bold front to the recent agitation which, weak from the outset, seems now to have entirely collapsed'.

has been made of this affair'.[60] This episode, although trivial on the surface, perfectly illustrates the social gulf between the Indoor and Outdoor staff and, in particular, the Outdoor staff's wish to remain socially separate from their resented Indoor colleagues.

Especially in secluded ports where the number of foreign residents was small and recreational amenities therefore in short supply, Customs clubs became a social focal point for the wider foreign community. In 1921, for example, the Antung Commissioner urged the IG to authorise the club's expansion because 'the Western foreign community is still too small and too scattered for any hope to be entertained of establishing an international non-Service Club for recreation'.[61] Even in Shanghai, famed for its entertainment and nightlife offerings, thirty of the 182 Customs club members in 1931 were not Customs men.[62] Defending the membership of non-Customs men to the IG, the Shanghai Commissioner protested that the practice of admitting outsiders 'is one that is followed by practically all Customs Clubs in China'. Opening the doors of the club to non-Customs men 'promotes the sociability and attractiveness of a Club', the Commissioner argued and, moreover, it 'broadens the minds of its members to meet other than their own colleagues when Service matters only are liable to be the subject of conversation'. The Commissioner did, however, recommend that the quota of non-Customs members should not exceed fifteen percent and that 'strict rules as to their admission should be enforced to secure a proper type of such members'.[63] In the 1930s, as the numbers of foreign employees in certain ports rapidly declined, Customs clubs were becoming less the preserve of the Customs staff and more the territory of the wider foreign community. In 1930, for example, the Nanjing Commissioner reported that because only four foreigners were stationed at the Nanjing Custom house the vast majority of club users were honorary non-Customs members. As the organisation was, therefore, a Customs club only in name, its management was relinquished and the premises were leased to the foreign residents, and it went on to thrive as a social centre under the name of the 'Bungalow

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[60] CSA, 679(2) 1829, 'Swatow Customs: dispatches from IG', IG dispatch no. 655, 16 October 1884.
[61] CSA, 679(1) 17062, 'Chinese and foreign staff clubs, Antung', Antung dispatch no. 1,944, 19 February 1921.
[62] CSA, 679(1) 17084, 'Customs clubs, Shanghai', Shanghai dispatch no. 21,428, 11 February 1931.
[63] CSA, 679(1) 17084, 'Customs clubs, Shanghai', Shanghai dispatch no. 24,082, 20 February 1931. The Customs club was also often used as a venue for musical events or for dancing, to which the wider foreign community was invited. In 1935, for example, the Swatow Commissioner asked for permission to enlarge the club premises for this purpose. See CSA, 679(1) 17097, 'Customs clubs, Swatow', Swatow dispatch no. 7,481, 4 December 1935.

Club' until its closure in 1942.[64] Although their primary purpose was to establish a separate Customs social milieu, free from the damaging influences of the Chinese world and the taint of the more disreputable treaty port diversions, Customs clubs also extended their hospitality to other foreigners who fit the Inspectorate's concept of respectability.

The Inspectorate, then, sought to cultivate a Service-distinct social world through the institution of the Customs club. In sponsoring official Customs clubs the Inspectorate encouraged the development of staff camaraderie and also contained a fair proportion of its employees' social activities within the bounds of Service control, working to safeguard them from the less than respectable temptations of treaty port society. The limited social opportunities of the Customs club, however, competed for attention with the social offerings of the wider foreign community, which differed very little from those available to Western men elsewhere in empire. The example of the foreign Customs staff, however, also complicates our picture of social life in the empire world. In their position as employees of the Chinese government, foreign Customs men were required to remember their difference from other foreigners in China at all times. Yet it was also necessary for Customs men to participate in and conform to the conventions of treaty port society if they were to secure their reputations and make their mark in China. Furthermore, whereas most social histories of empire emphasise the central role played by the club in elite circles, the case of the Customs staff brings to light the multiplicity of social worlds within foreign societies. Treaty port foreign society, and 'white' communities in the empire world more broadly, were intensely class conscious and men such as the Outdoor Staff were required to form alternative social environments, which were usually distinct in both character and practice from those of their Indoor colleagues.

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[64] CSA, 679(1) 23224, 'Bungalow Club, Nanking', Nanjing dispatch no. 3,642, 28 March 1930.

2) Private lives

Whereas the social lives of Customs employees were played out in public—and were therefore subject to a certain degree of regulation and control from both the Inspectorate and the wider foreign community—private lives were much more difficult to monitor and manage. In the wider empire world the importance of the domestic sphere as a site where imperial loyalties and cultures were strengthened, in turn bolstering the colonial state, has been well-documented.[65] Ann Stoler, for example, has argued that 'colonial authorities with competing agendas agreed on two premises: children had to be taught both their place and their race, and the family was the crucial site in which future subjects were to be made and loyal citizenship was to be learned.'[66] Conversely, behind closed doors transgressions from the norms of colonial society could be made and sexual, racial and social taboos could be broken.[67] The off-duty conduct of colonial officials and settlers could either strengthen or erode 'white prestige' and the private lives of foreigners in the non-Western world, therefore, needed to be regulated and controlled.

The case of the foreign Customs staff was somewhat different from that of other cadres of men working in the colonial world. According to the Inspectorate's official rhetoric, maintaining imperialistic identities and 'white prestige' in China were minor concerns for the Service and, as we have seen, the Inspectorate actively tried to disassociate its employees from the more nationalistic and imperialistic views of China's foreign communities. From its early years the Inspectorate's attitude towards policing the private behaviour of its foreign employees was decidedly ambivalent. In an 1873 circular Hart asserted that 'I have no desire whatsoever to interfere with men's private affairs, but, as Inspector General, I cannot stand by, look on, and do nothing, when a man allows his private temperament to harm the official

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[65] See Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York, 1995), 'Introduction', pp. 1-17. For an analysis of the relationship between 'home,' concepts of domesticity and political ideologies see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1750-1850* (Chicago IL, 1987). For a discussion of race, class and family in nineteenth-century Britain see Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge, 1992), particularly Part III, 'Race, Ethnicity and Difference'.

[66] Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, p. 84.

[67] See, for example, Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, Chapter Four, 'Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers', pp. 79-110.

position held by him'.[68] In other words, the Inspectorate would not pry into its employees' private lives providing that their off-duty conduct did not threaten to dent the Customs' spotless reputation. Successive Inspector Generals consistently reiterated Hart's original stance on this issue until the Foreign Inspectorate's end. Many Customs men, in any case, led less than exemplary private lives by the standards of China's foreign communities. Hart himself had an eight-year relationship with a Cantonese woman named Ayaou, with whom he had three children, which he began when stationed in Ningbo as a student interpreter in the 1850s. He ended the relationship three years after landing the job of Inspector General, apparently judging his private life to be incompatible with his new professional responsibilities.[69] The Inspectorate was fully aware that the private conduct of its employees was often less than impeccable, but was willing to overlook this providing that the Customs' good reputation was not damaged.

The private lives of employees were, however, policed in a different way: through the power of gossip and scandal. Kristen McKenzie has argued that gossip and scandal performed a vital regulatory function in colonial societies, denoting what was respectable and what was unacceptable behaviour. Respectability was, moreover, intimately tied up with defining the status and social rank of individuals within nascent colonial communities, becoming 'a weapon to be wielded in the social competition whereby each would find their level in the new society'.[70] In China's cloistered treaty port communities the power of gossip and scandal was keenly felt by Customs men. J. O. P. Bland, for example, observed that rumour and gossip were endemic in Peking's foreign society. Recounting the diplomatic community's reaction to his affair with a secretary at the Russian embassy, Bland remarked that 'Peking society lived and moved in a big glass house, all girt about with watchful, Oriental eyes, and diplomacy had perforce its dignity to maintain "in *partibus infidelium*"'.[71] Despite the Inspectorate's exhortations that its employees remain indifferent to the prejudices harboured by other foreigners in China, Customs men—

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[68] *Documents Illustrative*, vol. I, circular no. 24 of 1873 (first series), 'Commissioners and Superintendents; relations between', 18 December 1873.
[69] For a detailed account of Hart's relationship with Ayaou and his three children from this relationship see Lan Li and Deidre Wildy, 'A new discovery and its significance: The statutory declarations made by Sir Robert Hart concerning his secret domestic life in nineteenth-century China', *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 43 (2003), pp. 63-87.
[70] McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies*, p. 13. Henry Lethbridge has also noted that gossip and scandal were rife in Hong Kong's foreign society. Lethbridge, *Hong Kong: Stability and Change*, p. 182.
[71] J. O. P. Bland, unpublished memoir, Chapter Five, 'Peking', pp. 17-18.

and particularly the Indoor Staff, who formed the reputable public front of the Customs—could not afford to deviate too far from the behavioural standards set by the treaty ports' self-appointed guardians of respectability.

Bachelor lifestyles

Like other overseas administrators in the empire world, newly-arrived Customs men found themselves in an almost exclusively male working environment. Only approximately 400 of the 22,335 Customs employees recorded over the course of the Foreign Inspectorate's existence were women, who were appointed to the larger ports as stenographers and typists during the 1920s and 1930s.[72] In many postings Customs employees also occupied an overwhelmingly masculine foreign social *milieu*.[73] Especially in the nineteenth century and in small ports foreign women were scarce—sometimes with the exceptions of the wives and daughters of the local consuls and a handful of missionaries. In the twentieth century, as living conditions in China improved and it was considered safe to marry and raise families in China, and as limited employment opportunities for single women as, for example, typists in foreign firms arose in the larger treaty ports, the gender imbalance evened out somewhat. Even in the twentieth century, however, junior Customs men still worked, socialised and lived in a largely male environment. Prohibited from marrying for their first few years of service, foreign employees in the larger ports were surrounded with fellow bachelors and usually lived in either the Assistants' or the Outdoor 'mess', an experience which was intended to build service camaraderie through communal living.[74] As Indoor employees were fewer in number than their Outdoor counterparts, especially in smaller ports, and were also more highly valued by the Inspectorate, their quarters were invariably more spacious, well-furnished, and well-equipped. *Figure 4.6*, a photograph of the Assistants' mess in early twentieth-century Lappa,

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[72] Figures derived from service lists database of employees withdrawn from service. In the postwar Colonial Service recruitment drive, women began to be appointed to relatively senior positions; eighty women were appointed as administrative officers to African colonies, 1944-60. Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of Authority*, pp. 181-82. In the Customs, however, women were never appointed as Assistants.

[73] Some historians have argued that travel to the non-European world and empire was, in any case, an explicitly masculine endeavour in the popular British imagination. See, for example, John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Harlow, 2005).

[74] Communal living could, however, also lead to friction amongst employees. L. C. Arlington recounted how in Fuzhou in 1889 the Outdoor Staff lived together in the 'Pagoda Anchorage' ten miles from the town. Life at 'the Anchorage' was 'far from a happy one' because of the tension between the Tidesurveyor and the Boat Officer. See Arlington, *Through the Dragon's Eyes*, p. 138.

shows that—at least in some ports—the Inspectorate went to great lengths to supply junior Assistants with comfortable and attractive lodgings.

Tidewaiters, on the other hand, were not so well-provided for. Especially in large ports such as Shanghai, Tidewaiters usually lived barracks-style in a large building. Although provided with a room or two each, Outdoor accommodation often lacked privacy and its inhabitants were also subject to stricter controls on their movement and off-duty conduct. The 'Rules of the House' for men living in Outdoor accommodation issued in 1876 placed all quarters under the control of the Tidesurveyor, who periodically patrolled the buildings to ascertain that nothing was amiss. All residents were warned to abstain from 'indecorous conduct' and to refrain from bringing unauthorised guests—more particularly women—onto Customs property, and the gates were locked promptly at midnight. Furthermore, Service restrictions on and knowledge of staff movements and activities were not confined to their use of Customs property. Outdoor men were instructed that, 'on quitting Customs quarters when off duty, you are to leave such information as will lead to your being readily found if required'.[75] Whereas the off-duty movements of Assistants, who the Inspectorate evidently trusted to abstain from mischief, were not monitored, the Customs kept a check on Outdoor Staff whereabouts at all times.

Figure 4.6

Drawing room, Assistants' quarters in Lappa, Macao, ca. 1906-09 [76]

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[75] IG circular no. 2 of 1876, 'Outdoor Staff Instructions', 25 May 1876.
[76] Photograph taken from SOAS, PP MS 82/13 Hedgeland papers, box 3.

Figure 4.7

Drawing room, Commissioner's house, Nanning, c. 1918 [77]

Although the various standards of Service accommodation for foreign employees were always allocated on a sliding scale of status, based upon rank and branch with the Commissioner at the top end and the Watcher at the bottom, the quality of available accommodation varied tremendously between ports. Securing a sufficient number of houses to accommodate the foreign staff in any one port was always a trial for Commissioners. China's foreign communities dictated that, in addition to maintaining social distance from Chinese communities, foreigners should also maintain a lifestyle which was as distinctly Western as possible. This attitude also manifested itself in accommodation and the houses of foreigners in China were typically adorned with Western-style furnishings and decorations. Where it was achievable, then, Customs quarters—especially Indoor Staff accommodation—were usually incongruously decked out with Western furniture and Victoriana (see *Figures 4.6 and 4.7*). To save employees from hauling the entire contents of their households between postings, the Customs typically issued furnishings, crockery and kitchenware to each house. Such Western-style items were difficult to find in China, and Customs correspondence is littered with tedious and protracted disputes about breakages and soiling of Inspectorate-owned furniture and equipment.

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[77] Photograph taken from SOAS, PP MS 82/14 Hedgeland papers, box 3.

In keeping with the attitudes of treaty port foreign society on this issue the Inspectorate believed that its foreign employees required a higher standard of accommodation, with reasonably Westernised facilities, than that provided by traditional Chinese houses. Houses which fit the bill were, however, few and far between, although Customs men were never required to build their own houses from scratch as were many twentieth-century British DOs in Africa.[78] The nineteenth-century Tianjin Customs experienced more than its fair share of strife in acquiring suitable staff lodgings. In 1883, for example, the Tianjin Commissioner reported that the present use of three rooms in a temple as accommodation for two Tidewaiters was simply not acceptable for foreign employees. 'The present occupant of the quarters has brought to my attention the hardship he endures in being obliged to occupy them,' reported the Commissioner, and after inspection he pronounced them unfit 'for further occupation by a European.'[79] A few years later, in 1887, the Tianjin Commissioner again complained of the great 'scarcity of house accommodation in Tientsin,' and reported that he had rented a house formerly used by the 'Lazarist Mission' because two Examiners would have otherwise been forced to 'live in native houses in the city'.[80] In the same year the Commissioner also reported that he had secured Service accommodation for the preventive staff stationed at Dagu in a temple, in which eleven rooms could be converted to fit 'Western requirements'. The Commissioner evidently experienced no qualms about using the building as Customs quarters, and making the resident priest homeless in the process.[81]

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[78] Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of Authority*, pp. 74-5.

[79] CSA, 679(2) 1932, 'Tianjin dispatches to IG', Tianjin dispatch no. 182, Commissioner Hobson to IG Hart, 16 December 1883.

[80] CSA, 679(2) 1933, 'Tientsin dispatches to IG, 1884-8', Tianjin dispatch no. 290, Commissioner to Hart, 7 April 1887.

[81] CSA, 679(2) 1933, 'Tientsin dispatches to IG, 1884-8', The purchasing of Chinese land or buildings, and especially temples, could lead to considerable friction with local communities. In the first decade of the twentieth century, for example, the Customs was involved in an ongoing land dispute at Swatow because the local community believed that the Customs had no claim to the land it occupied. CSA, 679(1) 17630, 'Handing-over-charge memoranda, Swatow, 1900-26', handing-over-charge memo, acting Deputy Commissioner Currie to Commissioner Gilchrist, 17 May 1909. In 1920 the Wuchow Customs became involved in a dispute with the local community because of Customs plans to build on a hillside scattered with ancestral graves. The dispute was settled when the Customs agreed to pay for the graves to be moved to another site. See CSA, 679(1) 23202, 'Indoor Staff quarters, Wuchow', Wuchow dispatch no. 2,876, 10 May 1920. A further problem with the use of temples as quarters was the general unwillingness of Chinese employees to occupy them due to fear of spirits. In 1937, for example, the Luichow Commissioner complained that the only quarters he could find to rent in Muling (under the Luichow Customs' jurisdiction) were temples, and that 'no Chinese member of the staff is willing to occupy the ancestral temples for superstitious reasons'. CSA, 679(1) 14237, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1937, Kiungchow- Santuao', Luichow semi-official, 9 January 1937.

In the twentieth century, as quarters tailored to Customs requirements began to be built, discrepancies in accommodation standards between ports increased. Whereas the dilapidated condition of Customs quarters in some ports imposed considerable hardships upon the men forced to live in them, employees in other postings lived in comparative luxury. In the 1920s, Wuchow Tidewaiters lived comfortably in self-contained flats specially designed to fit 'European requirements' by the Works Department, each consisting of a bedroom, sitting room, bathroom, kitchen and servant's room.[82] Their colleagues in Harbin were less fortunate. In 1919 the Harbin Commissioner reported on the extreme shortage of housing in the port, due in part to recent influx of Russian refugees which meant that 'Russians of the lower class snap up any house or room'. As a result, the Outdoor staff were forced to live in rooms 'in which no European officer in any other port of China would consent to live'.[83] A similar scarcity of suitable houses caused considerable trouble for the Luichow Commissioner, who found it impossible to find houses in the 'frontier' stations surrounding his port. Some employees 'have settled down in buildings that are little better than mud hovels', he reported, 'but which they have managed to adapt with great ingenuity'. The Tidesurveyor, despite being one of the highest-ranking employees in the port, was housed in a temple which was 'hot in the summer and impossible to heat in the winter', and, moreover, had 'no privacy as on certain days during each month the temple is open to the public'.[84] The grim realities of accommodation provisions in certain ports could prove a sharp shock for those who had expected their standard of living to soar on travelling to China. Although roughing it in a temple or a mud hut could seem all part of the adventure of living in China at first, the novelty of such conditions would soon wear off and a long stay was an unanticipated hardship for many foreign employees.

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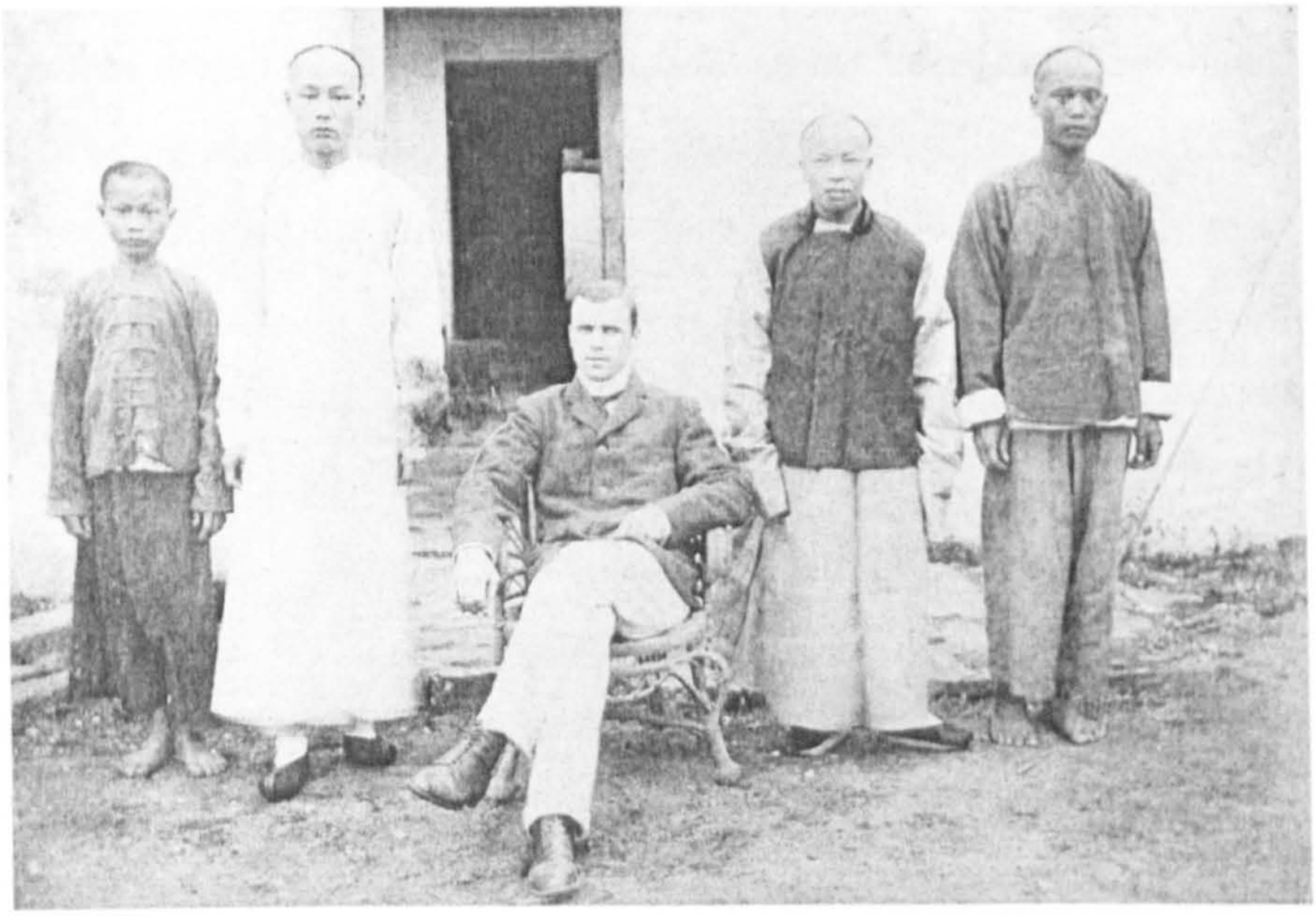
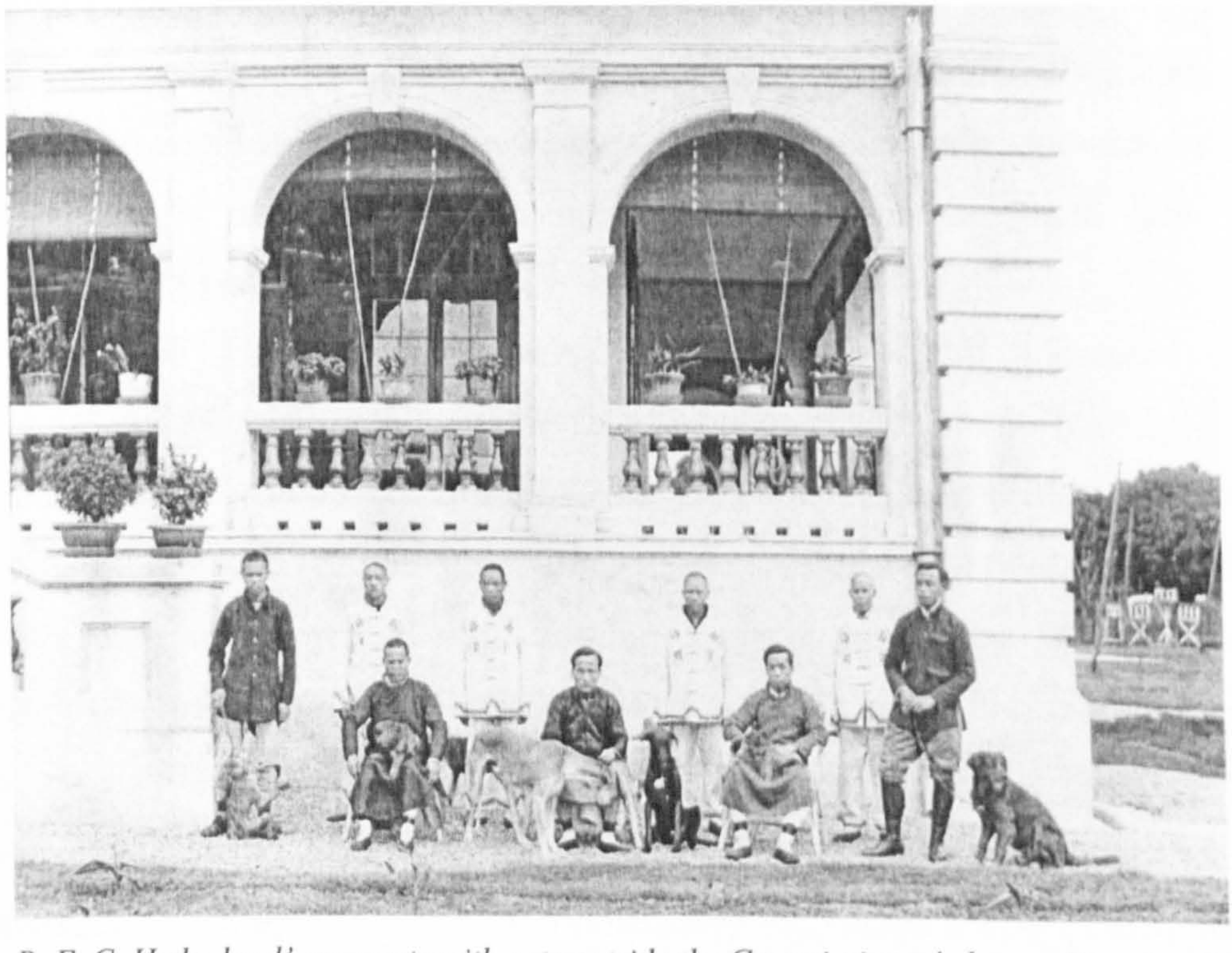
[82] CSA, 679(1) 23201, 'Outdoor Staff quarters, Wuchow,' Wuchow dispatch no. 2,475, 5 December 1914.
[83] CSA, 679(1) 23119, 'Outdoor Staff quarters, Harbin,' Harbin dispatch no. 1,903, 3 April 1919.
[84] CSA, 679(1) 14237, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1937, Kiungchow- Santuao,' Luichow semi-official, 9 January 1937. As a result of this lack of privacy, the Commissioner reported, the Tidesurveyor had felt unable to bring his wife to his posting.

Figure 4.8



R. F. C. Hedgeland with his servants, Haikou (Hoihow), Hainan Island, 1898 [85]

Figure 4.9



R. F. C. Hedgeland's servants with pets outside the Commissioner's house, Nanning, 1918 [86]

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[85] Photograph taken from SOAS, PP MS 82/13, Hedgeland papers, box 3. Hedgeland labelled his servants as 'punkah coolie', 'boy', 'cook' and 'house coolie'.

[86] Photograph taken from SOAS, PP MS 82/14, Hedgeland papers, box 3. The servants in the back row are labelled as 'chair coolies'. Those in the front row are labelled as 'coolie', 'house coolie', 'boy', 'cook', and 'coolie'.

In many ways, however, the Customs staff undoubtedly *did* enjoy a higher standard of living than would have ever been possible at 'home'. Like other Westerners in the empire world, foreign Customs men had few misgivings about exploiting 'white prestige' in return for a higher standard of living. Large numbers of servants were one of the most visible status symbols. Although even the lowest ranking foreign Customs staff could expect to employ at least one personal servant—or 'boy' in treaty port parlance—who took care of their daily cooking and cleaning, a large number of servants denoted a higher status in the Customs and in treaty port society more widely. Rasmussen, on joining the Outdoor staff, automatically gained the services of one 'boy', yet on stepping up a few notches on the social hierarchy after joining a foreign firm in Zhenjiang he suddenly found himself master to five servants and four chair-bearers; 'The custom of the China coast decreed that I must keep at least a cook, a boy, and a coolie', he wrote nostalgically.[87] At the beginning of his career in the Indoor staff in 1898, R. F. C. Hedgeland employed four servants (see *Figure 4.8*). Twenty years later, when occupying the Nanning Commissioner's post in 1918 Hedgeland, like Rasmussen, apparently found it necessary to employ nine personal servants, including four chair-bearers (see *Figure 4.9*). Although China's foreign communities, and the foreign Customs staff, were cross-hatched with status distinctions, all enjoyed a standard of living which would have been inconceivable at 'home'.

Unmarried Customs men were also presented with increased sexual opportunities and liberties than would have perhaps been possible at 'home'. A now-substantial body of scholarship has explored the concept of empire as an arena of sexual opportunity for Western men. Whereas sexual contact between white women and native men was regarded with nothing short of horror by Western society, relationships between Western men and native women were often tacitly accepted, with the proviso that they were conducted discreetly. Ronald Hyam has ventured so far as to argue that relationships with native women were one of *the* principal defining characteristics of the empire world, and practically the *raison d'être* of men working for colonial services.[88] Hyam's analysis, however, lacks nuance and, moreover, ignores the power imbalances inherent in these relationships, yet the anxieties

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[87] Rasmussen, *China Servant*, p. 78.
[88] Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester, 1990), Chapter Seven, 'Chastity and the Colonial Service', pp. 157-81.

surrounding mixed-race sexual relations have also been discussed in more considered studies.[89] The case of India, for example, has been well-documented in this respect; many historians have charted the growth of official concern about mixed-race relationships in the late nineteenth century and anxiety about the perceived damage caused to racial prestige as a result.[90]

Although China, never strictly a colony, did not have a large official foreign presence, a similar pattern of growing unease about relationships between Chinese women and Western men was present. In the nineteenth century these relationships had been viewed as a necessary, if not entirely desirable, outcome of treaty port bachelor society. In 1905, embarrassed by his relationship with Ayaou fifty years earlier, Hart rationalised; 'when I arrived in China in 1854 I found that any acquaintance I made kept his Chinese girl and in 1857 I fell into the habit myself.'[91] Empire-wide anxieties about racial mixing and the undermining of 'white prestige', combined with the growing number of marriageable white women in China, worked to increase the taboo factor of sexual contact with Chinese women in the twentieth century. Little was said, however, in Customs correspondence about the sexual conduct of the Indoor staff. Relationships between unmarried Indoor men and Chinese women certainly existed, yet they were tacitly accepted by the Service providing that they were conducted inconspicuously and did not lead to marriage. Paul King summed up the Customs' ambivalent attitude to mixed-race sexual relations in his memoir:

> The number of marriageable girls of his own race all over China gives no excuse to a white man seeking a helpmeet to risk entangling alliances with native blood; but as a temporary measure in the dark old days—well, perhaps better not to hazard an opinion.[92]

Although King professed to be uneasy with these liaisons, J. O. P. Bland was less censorious, commenting that:

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[89] For a critique of Hyam's controversial arguments see Helen Bradford, 'Sex, Lies and Englishmen', *South African History Journal*, no. 26 (1992), pp. 209-14 and Berger, 'Imperialism and Sexual Exploitation'.

[90] See Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics* (New York, 1980), Chapter Six, 'Upper-Class Morals and Racial Prestige'. Ballhatchet argues that growing official worries about prestige in India were symptomatic of increasing doubts about 'the ability of the British administration to convince people that its standards were the right ones' (p. 149). Also see Caplan, *Children of Colonialism*.

[91] Quote taken from a statutory declaration written by Hart on 19 August 1905 in order to prove that his 'marriage' with Ayaou was not official, and that his children by his wife, Hester Jane Bredon, were therefore his legitimate heirs. Transcribed in Lan Li and Deirdre Wildy, 'A new discovery and its significance'.

[92] King, *In the Chinese Customs Service*, p. 25.

> There were generally one or two [Chinese women] on the strength of the Customs Mess, placid and unobtrusive individuals, generally dressed in shiny black, without any of the seductive coquetry and winning ways of their Japanese prototypes, but amiable creatures withal, models of propriety and honest as this world goes.[93]

Although tempted to acquire a Chinese partner of his own, Bland claimed that he resisted— mainly because he could not afford to pay the upkeep for a woman *and* his pony.[94] It appears, then, that relationships between Indoor men and Chinese women were tolerated, and even expected. The Service did not intervene in the sexual lives of its foreign Indoor employees who could usually be trusted to conduct their relationships inconspicuously and without defaming the Customs' good name.

Outdoor and Marine employees had less of a reputation to defend and were therefore to a certain extent permitted greater liberties in their private conduct. In any case, Outdoor and Marine men were held in low regard by the Service and by treaty port society at large and so indecorous behaviour was almost expected of them. C. E. Temlett, for example, described how he and his colleagues in the Outdoor staff, when stationed in Shanghai, were able to habitually visit the brothels and dancehalls which lined Shanghai's streets in the 1920s without fear of reprimand from their superiors in the Service.[95] The Marine and Lights Staffs, who in most cases lived and worked at some distance from the watchful eye of their Commissioners, were the most usual culprits in matters of sexual misconduct. In 1940, for example, Officer Anderson, stationed with the River Inspectorate on the Middle Yangzi, was reported to the Coast Inspector for the offence of having 'kept continuously a female on board his vessel'. The woman in question was the daughter of a coal dealer who regularly supplied the Customs launches at Wushan with fuel.[96] Because the only real offence committed by Anderson was that of bringing a woman onto Customs property, he escaped with a warning and the episode did not prove particularly injurious to his career in the long term, although the Inspectorate clearly disapproved of his actions.

A few years earlier Commander Allton, stationed on the C. P. S. Yunhsing at Shanghai, did not escape with so light a punishment for his sexual misdemeanours.

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[93] J. O. P. Bland, unpublished memoir, Chapter Two, 'Hankow in the Eighties,' p. 6.
[94] J. O. P. Bland, unpublished memoir, Chapter Two, 'Hankow in the Eighties,' p. 8.
[95] Interview with C. E. Temlett, BBC, 'Lion and the Dragon'. For an analysis of rising concern about the effects of prostitution on Shanghai's European population, and the subsequent 1920s campaign against prostitution in the International Settlement, see Gail Hershatter, 'Regulating Sex in Shanghai; The Reform of Prostitution in 1920 and 1951', in Frederick Wakeman and Wen-hsin Yeh (eds.), *Shanghai Sojourners* (Berkeley CA, 1992), pp. 145-85.
[96] CSA, 679(1) 1001, 'Confidential Coast Inspector to Commissioners and senior marine officers', Deputy Commissioner Tu Ping Ho, Yichang, to Coast Inspector Sabel, 23 December 1940.

Allton was accused of 'immoral' behaviour and was pronounced 'guilty of action subversive of discipline and of abusing his official authority by ordering members of his crew to procure women for him'. In view of the misuse of his authority and the public nature of his conduct the Staff Secretary felt 'compelled to dismiss him from the Service'.[97] Lightkeepers, too, were prone to sexual misconduct, which often went unnoticed by the Inspectorate because of the isolated location of most lighthouses. In 1938, for example, Lightkeeper Sorensen stationed near Qiongzhou (Kiungchow), was rather ambiguously accused of 'annoying local girls' tending to cattle and buffalo in the fields surrounding the lighthouse, although Sorensen claimed, rather unconvincingly, that 'he was merely trying to frighten the animals away from his path and did not intend to molest the people'. The Commissioner had his doubts about Sorensen's intentions, but chose to transfer him to a different station rather than take disciplinary action.[98] Where the truth of allegations of sexual misconduct was disputed and when public invective could be avoided, employees were likely to be transferred or reprimanded rather than dismissed for their actions. Stationed as he was in a remote lighthouse, news of Sorensen's behaviour could be easily contained whereas the Inspectorate was quick to crack down on Allton, whose conduct threatened to create a public scandal for the Service.

Whereas the transgressions of young and single Outdoor and Marine men could be overlooked, and were almost expected, older and more senior men, who were well-known to the foreign community and were expected to behave responsibly, posed more of a threat to the Service's reputation if they acted inappropriately. In Chapter Three, for example, we saw how in 1884 Tidesurveyor Gallagher at Shanghai was forced to resign after having 'committed himself publicly with a native woman' and made 'an immoral exhibition of himself' whilst drunk.[99] A more complex and ambiguous case occurred in 1936 when a British resident of Hong Kong, R. S. Pigott, accused Assistant Tidesurveyor Thoresen at Samshui of kidnapping and 'seducing' his wife. In two incensed letters to the IG Pigott described how his wife, who was

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[97] CSA, 679(1) 1415, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1937, Shanghai-Wuhu', confidential letter, Staff Secretary Hu to Commissioner Lawford, Shanghai, 17 July 1937.
[98] CSA, 679(1) 1000, 'Confidential Coast Inspector to Commissioners and senior marine officers', Commissioner Groff-Smith, Qiongzhou, to Coast Inspector Carrel, 18 February 1938.
[99] CSA, 679(2) 1585, 'Shanghai Customs: dispatches to IG, 1884 (July-Dec)', Shanghai dispatch no. 207 to IG, 31 July 1884; minutes of the inquiry enclosed in Shanghai dispatch no. 226 to IG, 15 August 1884.

Chinese, had returned to her home village near Samshui after an argument with her husband. Thoresen, an old friend of Pigott's, allegedly tricked Mrs Pigott into returning to Samshui on the Customs launch by claiming that her husband had fallen ill. Halfway into the journey, Pigott alleged, 'to make a dirty story short, he deliberately seduced her'. Pigott ended his letter by demanding Thoresen's dismissal 'in order that a definite dirty smirch be removed from the good record of the Customs Service'.[100] In response to Pigott's impassioned complaint Staff Secretary Hu reiterated Hart's original maxim on the subject of policing staff behaviour. The Inspectorate had no desire to interfere in the private affairs of employees, he claimed, 'but when a man's conduct creates a public scandal which is likely to bring disgrace to the Service I have no option but to take disciplinary action'. Besides, Thoresen had quite clearly broken Customs rules by bringing a woman on board his launch, neglecting his duties, and submitting a false report of his whereabouts. Although the charges against him could not be definitely proved, Thoresen was provided with an opportunity to make a quiet retreat from the Service without attracting further public attention, being first suspended and given leave, at the end of which he was paid off.[101] Men such as Thoresen and Gallagher, whose actions threatened to raise public reprobation and disgrace the Service's good standing in the treaty port world, were evidently unwelcome additions to the foreign staff.

Marriage and family life

However enjoyable the bachelor lifestyle afforded by a man's first years in the Customs may have been, the artificial male bias in China's foreign communities could eventually wear thin. Rasmussen quickly tired of the exclusively male company available in Zhenjiang and so, in order to escape it, made frequent trips to the home of a Scottish family who ran a nearby paper mill. 'What does it matter if you sit on a soapbox, drinking tea out of an enamelled mug, when it is three years since you have

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[100] CSA, 679(1) 14103, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1936', letter of complaint from R. S. Pigott, enclosed in confidential letter, Staff Secretary Hu to Assistant-in-Charge Chan, Samshui, 17 February 1936. Pigott also demanded that Thoresen's 'accomplice' in the matter, Au Kai Fung, be dismissed.

[101] CSA, 679(1) 14103, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1936', confidential letters, Staff Secretary Hu to Assistant-in-Charge Chan, Samshui, 31 March 1936 and 21 May 1936. Thoresen was first given the option of resigning or of being suspended pending investigation. He chose suspension and the case was eventually settled when he was issued a severe reprimand and allowed to proceed on leave. Hu, however, instructed that he be paid off at the end of his leave due to his general unsatisfactoriness, but, 'in order to avoid giving satisfaction to Pigott', Thoresen's withdrawal was to remain a secret.

seen a woman pour out the tea, and tasted scones that melted in your mouth?', Rasmussen asked.[102] Especially in small ports, the scarcity of female companionship could cast a pall over foreign society in the eyes of Customs men. The Inspectorate itself was uneasy about the effects of too little 'respectable' female company upon the good character of its staff. In 1936, for example, the Wuhu Commissioner warned the Staff Secretary that a bachelor, 'unless he is a man of considerable character, is apt to deteriorate rapidly' in that port as there was 'literally *nothing* to do whatever, nowhere to go and nothing to see'.[103] Only with the support and distraction provided by a wife and family, the Inspectorate judged, could a Customs officer ward off the temptations and psychological dangers of life in a small port.

For the majority of the Service's existence, however, marriage was strictly disapproved of amongst junior staff. This was a cause of chagrin amongst many lower-level employees. '"Married Assistants". The IG Circulars are full of warnings and even threats to such misguided people', wrote Paul King bitterly.[104] Restrictions on marriage were certainly not uncommon in overseas services, which as a rule either prohibited or discouraged their employees from marrying early in their careers. The extra costs incurred by the wives and families of officials and, in the nineteenth century, misgivings about the ability of European women and children to cope with life in the colonies combined to ensure that overseas services did their best to deter junior employees from marrying. In the SMP, for example, men were only granted permission to marry, and therefore receive a married allowance, after their first long leave.[105] All British DOs in twentieth-century Africa were required to apply for permission to marry from the governor; in East and Central Africa permission would not be granted in the first six months of service, officers in Tanganyika had to wait for two years, and in West Africa only the most senior officers were permitted to marry.[106] The Inspectorate justified its stipulation that all entry-level applicants to the Service be unmarried by claiming that a wife would impede the mobility of employees between different postings in China and would encumber the Inspectorate

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[102] Rasmussen, *China Trader*, p. 47.
[103] CSA, 679(1) 14234, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1936,' semi-official letter, Commissioner Lowder, Wuhu, to Staff Secretary Hu, 11 September 1936. Lowder was prompted to express his concern after Examiner Byrnes, a bachelor, was transferred to his port.
[104] King, *In the Chinese Customs Service*, p. 70.
[105] Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, p. 153.
[106] Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of Authority*, p. 184.

with additional costs in the form of increased rent allowances and passage money for wife and family when returning home on leave. In 1898 the severity of Service marriage restrictions increased when Hart ruled that Assistants faced dismissal if they married within seven years of joining the Service. By 1913 the Inspectorate had relented somewhat, yet marriage was still very much disapproved of. Non-Resident Secretary Bruce Hart claimed that he had no desire to officially proscribe marriage, but that if a junior man insisted on marrying 'he will find that his married state will be disregarded' in terms of rent and passage allowances and frequency of transfer, 'a condition of discomfort which is better taken into account before than after marriage'.[107]

The most severe restrictions were imposed on the 'outdoor' branches. Until the 1920s employees below the rank of First Class Tidewaiter or Second Class Lightkeeper were obliged to ask their Commissioner for permission to marry or else face dismissal, and those ranked Third Class Tidewaiter or Lightkeeper were, in any case, always refused permission. In 1922, however, it was ruled that these prohibitions 'need not be adhered to'. Instead, the Inspectorate decided, *all* employees were technically permitted to marry, but Assistants of the fourth rank, Tidewaiters below the first rank and Lightkeepers below the rank of second class would not be provided with married quarters or privileges and, moreover, 'if their being married interferes with their usefulness, or entails Service inconvenience, they may be called upon to resign'.[108] Officers in the Coast and Marine staffs, moreover, who generally lived on board ship, were not entitled to any married quarters whatsoever. Whilst not exactly prohibiting marriage amongst juniors, then, the Inspectorate did its best to make marriage unworkable.

In 1937, however, all restrictions on marriage were lifted, 'experience having demonstrated' that these regulations 'have imposed considerable hardship on junior employees of the Service—particularly Chinese employees—and have raised anomalies and practical difficulties in their attempted enforcement'. Henceforth, all married employees were entitled to married quarters and rent and passage allowances. Staff were warned, however, that 'readiness to serve at any port in China remains one of the principal conditions of employment in the Customs Service', and that married

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[107] CSA, 679(3) 1602, 'NRS dispatches to IG, 1913', London Office no. 3,969, NRS Bruce Hart to IG Aglen, 12 August 1913.
[108] CSA, 679(1) 17270, 'General regulations governing marriage of Customs employees', draft IG circular no. 3,306, 26 May 1922.

status would not be allowed to interfere with this.[109] This triumph was, however, short-lived; the outbreak of war with Japan later in the same year meant that the new married regulations could not be put into force because of wartime financial stringency.[110] Complaints from junior employees about the hardships that this imposed continued to be sounded until married privileges for juniors were reinstated in 1942.[111]

In monitoring the marriages of its employees the Service went one step further than merely deciding when staff could marry. The wives of Assistants and high-ranking employees were subject to some degree of scrutiny to determine their suitability for life in a Customs posting. For Hart, the social qualities and good looks of a candidate's wife, which would enliven Peking's foreign society, were a serious factor to be taken into account when making appointments or promotions. Hart was notorious for this, sometimes being accused of acting out of favouritism as a result of becoming enamoured with the wives of certain Inspectorate employees. Bland recalled how during his year working in the Inspectorate in 1887 Hart was conducting a play-affair with the German wife of an American CCS man, 'upon whose previously undistinguished career the unexpected limelight fell when he found himself appointed Acting Assistant Secretary at the Inspectorate'.[112] Furthermore, when appointing Commissioners a wife's diplomacy and social abilities could make all the difference in deciding between an appointment to an insignificant backwater or to an important posting. Commenting on Commissioner Rocher in 1896, Hart pronounced him the 'the *most efficient* we have ever had' in Shanghai, yet lamented that 'he's handicapped by a wife that produces port storms and not family squalls', a serious problem when considering transfers.[113] As the Commissioner was one of the senior foreign authorities in most ports, their wives were required to act appropriately and avoid conflict.

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[109] CSA, 679(1) 17270, 'General regulations governing marriage of Customs employees', IG circular no. 5,517, 19 June 1937.
[110] CSA, 679(1) 17270, 'General regulations governing marriage of Customs employees', IG circular no. 5,623, 18 November 1937.
[111] CSA, 679(1) 17270, 'General regulations governing marriage of Customs employees'. In 1940, for example, junior officers in the Marine Staff forwarded a petition complaining that they could not afford to house their families nor pay for their families' passages when transferred. See confidential letter, Coast Inspector Sabel to IG Maze, 25 March 1940.
[112] J. O. P. Bland, unpublished memoir, Chapter Three, 'Under Hart at Peking', p. 13.
[113] *The I.G. in Peking*, vol. 2, letter Z/719, Hart to Campbell, 2 August 1896, p. 1076.

A wife could also be deemed unsuitable because of her race. Deep concern about marriages between European men and native women was present throughout the empire world. In certain colonies, such as German South-West Africa and East Africa, marriages between white settlers and natives were banned outright.[114] Such marriages blurred the boundaries between coloniser and colonised which white communities worked so hard to maintain, and were, moreover, legally sanctioned. The offspring of these marriages were even more unsettling for European communities; their ambiguous status threatened to undermine 'white prestige' and cast doubt on the criteria which could be used to determine nationality or 'Europeanness'.[115] The attitudes of China's foreign communities were no different. Eurasians were a disturbing presence for white settlers and expatriates and they occupied an ambivalent social position; in Hong Kong, for example, as Henry Lethbridge has commented, 'Eurasians in a European social gathering created a climate of unease and psychological tension'.[116]

The colonial mindset was reflected to some extent in the attitudes of the Inspectorate towards mixed-race marriages amongst its staff. Although unofficial relationships with Chinese women were, as we have seen, tacitly accepted, marriage was an entirely different matter. Marriage between Assistants and Chinese women was not officially proscribed but it was certainly strongly disapproved of—as were marriages between middle-class staff and Chinese women in other foreign-run organisations in China[117]—and such unions seem to have been extremely rare. Assistants were evidently well aware of the taboos which surrounded mixed-race marriages, especially when the man in question was 'respectable' and middle class. A rare case which came to Aglen's attention in 1911 involved Fourth Assistant A, W. Fitzgibbon, stationed at Changsha, who, it was reported, had 'bought a girl betrothed under Chinese custom to one man, and who has cohabited for some years with another', and then married her without informing the IG. This case, Aglen claimed, had resulted in a 'scandal most damaging to the good name of the Service'.

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[114] Lora Wildenthal, 'Race, Gender, and Citizenship in the German Colonial Empire', in Cooper and Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire*.
[115] See Caplan, *Children of Colonialism*, Chapter 3, 'Guarding Boundaries-Crossing Boundaries', pp. 59-90 for an analysis of the position of Anglo-Indian communities in colonial Madras and their attempts to defy social and racial boundaries. See Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, Chapter Four, 'Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers', pp. 79-110, for an analysis of the criteria used to assign nationality to mixed race individuals in French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies.
[116] Lethbridge, *Hong Kong: Stability and Change*, p. 177.
[117] See Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, 151-53.

'Continued unemployment is impossible', he decided; Fitzgibbon had, in any case, never received satisfactory reports and this incident served to prove that he was 'deficient in some moral qualities which we have a right to look for in our Indoor Staff.'[118] The consequences, then, were severe for Indoor men who broke marriage taboos. In the eyes of the Inspectorate and of the wider foreign community men of their class and status were expected to know better.

Outdoor employees, on the other hand, were less concerned with maintaining 'white prestige' and many Outdoor and Marine men married Chinese women and settled in China. Lightkeepers in particular often had Chinese wives, partners or families. As these men were already allocated a low position on the social scale, marriages between working class Europeans and Chinese women were of little import to the more 'respectable' and snobbish treaty port circles. Such marriages only became an issue for the Service if an Outdoor man married to a Chinese woman reached a high-ranking position. In 1937, for example, the Nanjing Commissioner reported that recently-appointed Tidesurveyor Broderick was 'totally unsuited to Nanking':

> Broderick is married to a Cantonese woman and for that reason is not exactly *persona grata* with Chinese and foreigners alike while the fact that his house is to all intents and purposes inside the British embassy compound only makes matters very much worse.[119]

The race of an Outdoor man's wife only became a problem, then, when he reached a professional position which placed him in the public eye. In this situation a man could come under fire from both Chinese and foreign elites because of his choice of wife.

When the marriages of its employees were facing difficulties the Inspectorate occasionally found it prudent to intervene, despite its professed reluctance to interfere in the private lives of its staff. In 1933, for example, the estranged wife of Examiner Kitson, a Latvian woman whom he had married at Chefoo (Yantai) in 1924, wrote a pitiful letter to the IG informing him that her husband had failed to provide any means of support for her and his son since his transfer to Swatow the previous year. The Inspectorate thought it wise to arbitrate in this case, and Kitson was ordered to explain his behaviour to his Commissioner. Although the Staff Secretary claimed to be loath to intervene he explained that 'it is incumbent upon employees to endeavour to

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[118] CSA, 679(1) 32828, 'IG semi-offical letter books to Commissioners, diplomats, etc.', letter from IG Aglen to Commissioner Wakefield, Changsha, 20 January 1911.
[119] CSA, 679(1) 14237, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1937', Commissioner Hilliard, Nanjing, to Staff Secretary Hu, 2 April 1937.

regulate their private life in such a manner as to make official interference unnecessary'.[120] Kitson, however, defended his conduct by protesting that 'from the day of his wedding his wife has never ceased nagging and taunting him and at the same time was constantly absent from the house'. Kitson claimed that he had made arrangements to support his wife and child, but rather than using the money to care for her son Mrs Kitson had spent it by 'constantly going about in expensive motor cars'.[121] In an attempt to resolve and contain the matter the IG transferred Kitson to Shanghai with instructions to endeavour to repair his marriage. Evidently, the Inspectorate was sometimes prompted to exhibit an attitude of paternal responsibility and make efforts to solve its employees' marital problems, particularly when an employee's wife complained directly to the IG.

Two years later the Inspectorate again became embroiled in solving the marital difficulties of another employee at Swatow, Assistant Appraiser Nielsen. The problem lay in the fact that Nielsen had 'become very enamoured with the typist in the General Office', notwithstanding the fact that he was already married and had five children. Nielsen's infatuation was becoming a distinct embarrassment to the Swatow Customs establishment, especially considering that he insisted on showering the object of his affections with expensive and conspicuous gifts, including a piano. The affair was made even more public by the fact that Mrs Nielsen had complained to both the Danish consul and the Deputy Commissioner on account of Nielsen's plans to send his wife (who was Chinese) and children to his home country of Denmark, 'so as to be free to follow up his "*affaire du coeur*"'. 'In view of the danger of a scandal and a break up of the Nielsen family and the slur this would cast on the Service', Nielsen was hastily transferred to Shanghai in the hope that his passion for the typist would subside if he were posted far from Swatow.[122] It is unclear whether the transfer put an

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[120] CSA, 679(9) 1421, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1933-35', semi-official letter, Staff Secretary Bradley to Commissioner Hilliard, Swatow, 11 September 1933 and enclosure from Karolina Kitson, 6 September 1933.

[121] CSA, 679(9) 1421, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1933-35', Commissioner Hilliard, Swatow, to Staff Secretary Bradley, 16 October 1933. Kitson also claimed that, in previous postings, he had 'been spoken to by his superior officers on account of his wife's behaviour for which he was considered responsible'.

[122] CSA, 679(9) 1421, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1933-35', personal letter, Commissioner Asker, Swatow, to Staff Secretary Hu, 15 June 1935. An episode in which the Inspectorate chose *not* to interfere occurred in 1937 when Boat Officer Gibson wrote an anxious letter to the IG reporting that he intended to permit his wife to divorce him yet was worried that this action would prejudice his Service career. After careful consideration the Staff Secretary ruled that the evidence Mrs Gibson intended to use to divorce her husband would most likely not cause 'a public scandal' and he could therefore go ahead with the proceedings. CSA, 679(1) 14235,

end to the affair, but Nielsen went on to have a long career in the Service, only leaving in 1943. The Inspectorate was not entirely without compassion, then, in dealing with the family problems of its staff, yet its principal motive in intervening was invariably to avert scandal and unwelcome publicity.

Building a family whilst working for the Customs Service was never an easy job. Constant transfers were often difficult to manoeuvre if accompanied by a large family and could cause considerable hardships. Long separations from wife and family were all too common, as they were in the empire world more broadly. Furthermore, for women who married Customs men outside of China, marriage could signal decades of separation from family and friends at home. Children were a further problem, especially for Indoor men who felt obliged to send their offspring 'home' for an education. The Staff Secretary was frequently assailed with letters from anxious parents requesting that they be granted early leave in order to manage their children's education or to start them on a career path at 'home'. Such long separations were often heart-rending for parents and children alike.[123] Outdoor men, who had a lower income and an inferior social status, were less likely to educate their children outside of China, yet would often find themselves distanced from their family whilst their children were at school in one of the larger treaty ports. Balancing family life and a Customs career, with the frequent transfers and adverse living conditions that this entailed, was a challenge for many foreign Customs men.

Subversive lives

Of much more pressing concern to the Service were those occasions when employees' private lives began to follow a more troublesome path. Certain personal difficulties, such as perpetually getting into debt, persistent drunkenness, and psychological breakdowns, clearly signalled that certain employees were beyond the reaches of Inspectorate control in their private lives and therefore a serious threat to the Customs' reputation. By far the most likely employees to go astray were low-ranking men in the Marine Department and Lights Staff, who worked and lived

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'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1937', confidential letter, Commissioner Little, Canton, to Staff Secretary Hu, 8 May 1937.

[123] See Buettner, *Empire Families*, Chapter Two, '"Not Quite Pukka": Schooling in India and the Acquisition of Racial Status', pp. 72-109 and Chapter Four, 'Sent Home to School: British Education, Status and Returns Overseas', pp. 146-87, for the debates and practices surrounding the education of British children in India.

furthest from the watchful eye and rigid controls of the Inspectorate and who often had the least to lose.

Debt was by far the most common personal problem amongst the staff. The Inspectorate was always disapproving of employees who got into debt, yet, in keeping with its oft-reiterated policy of avoiding interference in the private lives of its staff, only took disciplinary action when the Customs or the official position and authority of the employee in question was compromised; staff were enjoined, for example, not to borrow money from 'any merchant or person transacting business at the Custom House' or from 'any subordinate member of the Service'.[124] Men in the 'outdoor' branches were particularly susceptible to becoming indebted to businesses and individuals in China. Those who worked in these low-paid branches of the Service often found it difficult to maintain the standard of living expected of Europeans in China without sliding into debt. A petition for higher wages forwarded by the Shanghai Outdoor Staff in 1916, giving precise details of each man's monthly expenditure, revealed that Customs wages barely covered the cost of raising a family in China. However, although all petitioners claimed only to consume the bare necessities required for running a household, most listed such items as 'school fees', 'rickshaws', 'club chits' and 'tailor' amongst their monthly outgoings. Furthermore, all the petitioners listed payment of servants as being one of the most, or *the* most, costly domestic necessities, accounting for up to one fifth of monthly expenditure.[125] Even for low-paid and low-status Outdoor men it was usual to make expenditures which at 'home' would have seemed extravagant, and have simply been unaffordable, for men of their social class. Preserving the domestic standards of China's foreign communities was a difficult task for men receiving the meagre wages of an Outdoor man, especially for those with families to provide for, and many got into debt in the process.

Of most danger to the Service's interests, however, were those employees who got themselves into debt through sheer recklessness. Marine officers were especially prone, it seems, to running up debts. A repeat offender was Captain Mahan, commander of the preventive vessel *Liuhsing* stationed in Amoy (Xiamen) 1936-7. Mahan's debts, and his drinking problem, were recurrent and tiresome problems for

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[124] *Provisional Instructions for the Guidance of the In-door Staff* (Shanghai, 1877), p. 12.
[125] CSA, 679(1) 16826, 'Commissioners' reports on Outdoor Staff petitions for increase in pay in reply to circular no. 2545', enclosure in Shanghai dispatch no. 122, 23 October 1916.

the Service. In 1937 it emerged that Mahan had accumulated a debt of over $500 to Caldbeck's wine merchant, in addition to further debts to the *Liuhsing*'s 'wine mess' and to a Hong Kong hospital where he had recently received treatment.[126] When he eventually provided the Inspectorate with an explanation for his debts his Commissioner remained unimpressed, judging that 'the casual attitude he assumes with regard to his debts is reflected in the way he carries out his duties in general.'[127] Although Mahan paid his bill at Caldbeck's under Inspectorate pressure, later in the year even more substantial debts, this time in Fuzhou, came to light. Two of Mahan's debts in particular caused the Service acute embarrassment after the individuals concerned petitioned the British consul at Fuzhou to intercede with the Customs on their behalf. The fact that one of these debts was 'to a widow (now at home) exceedingly hard up' made his conduct even more reprehensible in the Inspectorate's eyes.[128] Mahan was warned that, 'such constant correspondence in regard to your financial affairs is a very serious matter which already has adversely affected your Service career and, unless adequate measures are taken by you to render it unnecessary, may result in even more serious consequences'.[129] Unfortunately, Mahan never did manage to solve his financial difficulties and he continued to run up debts until his resignation from the Service in 1940. Although Mahan's problems were evidently an embarrassment, the Inspectorate was reluctant to dismiss a senior Marine officer, whose skills might prove difficult to replace, on the grounds of his personal conduct.

At the same time as Mahan was accumulating his considerable debts, the Service was dealing with the disquieting prevalence of debt amongst the River Inspectorate staff. So many employees were found to owe money that the River Inspector, Fraser, was forced to issue a general warning to his staff:

> That I have been placed in the very embarrassing position of debt collector both for service and private accounts is due entirely to the utterly irresponsible behaviour of certain River Officers, who have recklessly run into debt in a most dishonourable manner, thereby bringing the service into disrepute.

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[126] CSA, 679(1) 999, 'Confidential Coast Inspector to and from staff', confidential letter, Commissioner Barwick, Amoy, to Coast Inspector Terry, 27 February 1937.
[127] CSA, 679(1) 999, 'Confidential Coast Inspector to and from staff', confidential letter, Commissioner Barwick, Amoy, to Coast Inspector Terry, 25 February 1937.
[128] CSA, 679(1) 999, 'Confidential Coast Inspector to and from staff', confidential letter, Commissioner Lowder, Foochow, to Coast Inspector Carrell, 28 February 1938.
[129] CSA, 679(1) 999, 'Confidential Coast Inspector to and from staff', confidential letter, Coast Inspector Carrel to Captain Mahan, 11 December 1937.

All future cases of debt would be referred immediately to the Commissioner, Fraser warned, and the employees concerned would be the recipients of 'drastic treatment'. For Fraser, the debts of foreign employees damaged the prestige of the Service and cast doubt upon the character and dependability of the employee in question. 'Character, reliability and sense of responsibility are indispensable adjuncts to a successful career', Fraser lectured, 'and the officer who through his own fault suffers from chronic impecuniosity has no proper place on the staff of the River Inspectorate'.[130] When it came to debt little distinction was made between private and professional lives; the inability of some employees to successfully manage their finances indicated that they did not possess the 'character' needed to make good Customs men.

Drunkenness was a second major problem amongst the staff. Drinking can perhaps be viewed as a 'colonial condition'— colonial society, with its short working hours, club-centred social life, frequent lack of family responsibilities, and loneliness, created an environment conducive to developing problems with alcohol. The Customs staff was no different in this respect, and reports of drinking problems amongst the foreign staff abounded from the Service's inception until the very end of its days. The penalties for insobriety and Inspectorate attitudes to drinking whilst on duty have been discussed at length in Chapter Three, so it will suffice to note that persistent drunkenness amongst the foreign staff only became a serious issue for the Inspectorate when an employee's drinking habits ceased to be an entirely private activity. There are countless examples of members of the foreign staff—usually Outdoor men—making public spectacles of themselves after a bout of heavy drinking. Tidewaiter Molineaux, for example, was promptly dismissed in 1865 after being 'found intoxicated about the streets and put in prison by the Municipal Police.'[131] A further example of a Tidewaiter's drunken conduct provoking public annoyance came in 1884 when the Shanghai Commissioner received complaints from a Mr Yoshioga that his neighbour, Tidewaiter Bonneau, 'acts with a good deal of violence and in a most disorderly manner every night', and also made a habit of throwing stones and

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[130] CSA, 679(1) 1000, 'Confidential Coast Inspector to and from Commissioners and senior Marine officers', draft River Inspectorate circular, River Inspector Fraser, Hankow, to Coast Inspector Terry, 22 March 1937.

[131] CSA, 679(2) 1557, 'Shanghai dispatches to IG, 1861-6', Shanghai dispatch no. 43, 1 June 1865. Molineaux had previously been dismissed for the same offence, but had then later been reinstated.

buckets of water at visitors to Yoshioga's house.[132] Incidents such as these were just as common in the twentieth century. In 1934, for example, Boat Officer Walters, whose drinking habit, considered 'bad enough to spoil his reputation,' had first come to light at Qiongzhou (Kiungchow) in 1929, was again reported to the IG by the Ningbo Commissioner on account of his raucous drunken behaviour. In addition to having 'lost all the respect from his subordinates' Walters' 'untidiness and behaviour have also given rise to much criticism and complaint from the community.' Moreover, the Commissioner testified, 'I was once placed in a very embarrassing position when a foreign lady asked me in a social gathering to chase him out of the room'.[133] Walters was subsequently paid off for unsatisfactory conduct in October 1934. Incidents such as these, when the private drinking habits of employees became the subject of public scrutiny and censure, threatened to dent both the Customs' reputation and that of the broader foreign community.

A third category of personal crisis which had the potential to endanger the Customs' reputation were cases of psychological breakdown. Cases of mental illness, although not ubiquitous, were certainly not exceptional in the foreign staff, especially for those stationed in a small port; isolation in a lifeless backwater could easily take its psychological toll on employees. A particularly unsettling case for the Inspectorate concerned Chief Assistant Schjoth at Yunnanfu in 1933. Commissioner Peel wrote a concerned letter to Maze beginning with the unpromising judgement that 'I have never thought that he was normal' and 'he is to my mind unquestionably on the border line of insanity'. Schjoth's behaviour had, moreover, become a matter for public discussion in his port; 'The community, both foreign and Chinese, complain frequently of his actions', Peel reported, and the port doctor had pronounced him 'un homme anormal et dangereux' who was 'livré a des actes de violence injustifiés qui auraient pu facilement dégénérer aux scandals publics'.[134] Because Schjoth's mental

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[132] CSA, 679(1) 1674, 'Shanghai Customs: General letters received, 1881-4', letter, Mr Yoshioga to Commissioner, 30 May 1884. Bonneau was later discharged from the Service in October 1884.
[133] CSA, 679(1) 31639, 'IG confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1929', confidential letter, Commissioner Kurematsu, Qiongzhou, to IG Maze, 27 February 1929; CSA, 679(1) 14101, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1933-5', confidential letter, Ningbo Commissioner to IG Maze, 8 February 1934.
[134] CSA, 679(1) 31644, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1932-3', confidential letter, Commissioner Peel, Yunnanfu, to IG Maze, 9 May 1933. Peel also reported that, on account of his psychological problems, Schjoth had taken to beating his wife and was therefore writing partly out of concern that a 'tragedy may result'. A similar, yet less dramatic, case occurred in 1938 when the Kongmoon Commissioner requested that Examiner Thalberg be transferred to another port as he had been 'under a continuous nerve strain for many months' and the previous winter 'was on the

state was considered too dangerously unstable to cope with a sudden decision to invalid him, he was instead quietly transferred to Shanghai and then sent home under the pretence of going on leave.[135]

The fear and paranoia born out of wartime conditions or local unrest in China caused the psychological health of the Customs staff to deteriorate markedly. In Chapter Two, for example, I outlined the case of Assistant Tidesurveyor Pogodin, whose delusion that the Japanese were pursuing him culminated in a nervous breakdown. Japanese employees were particularly hard-hit by local unrest and expectations of impending conflict; the Qingdao Commissioner unhappily reported in May 1937 that so far that year he had already been obliged to send four Japanese employees on sick leave due to the trauma caused by local political conditions. 'The strain has probably told more heavily on the Japanese members of the staff in that they have had to face more direct threats,' the Commissioner surmised, adding that three members of staff 'had reached a stage when they would stand no more and were in danger of breaking up.' A fourth man, Assistant Yamagata, had been hospitalised after he began 'telephoning wildly to the Deputy Commissioner and various members of the staff that they, or the Custom House, were about to be attacked'.[136] The Inspectorate was generally sympathetic in such cases and sick leave and transfers to quieter ports were usually granted. In such cases of psychological strain and illness the personal problems of an employee inevitably impinged upon their professional lives and the Inspectorate was obliged to intervene.

Certain high-profile incidents involving foreign employees, which associated the Customs' name with society's disreputable underbelly, were also potentially damaging for the Customs. Customs men who appeared to move in dubious circles or who became entangled in subversive political affairs were a liability. Mysterious deaths were one example of this type of incident. The case of Boat Officer Kimmel, who died in Canton in 1933, is a case in point. Although the official verdict on

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verge of a nervous breakdown'. CSA, 679(9) 1429, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1938', confidential letter, Commissioner Williams, Kongmoon, to Staff Secretary Hu, 17 August 1938.

[135] CSA, 679(1) 31644, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1932-33', confidential letter, Commissioner Peel, Yunnanfu, to IG Maze, 23 May 1933. It was later decided that Schjoth should be notified that he was being paid off after arriving in Shanghai rather than keeping the news from him until he returned home.

[136] CSA, 679(9) 1415, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1937', confidential letter, Commissioner Campbell, Qingdao, to Staff Secretary Kishimoto, 19 May 1937.

Kimmel's death was suicide, rumours persisted that he had in fact been murdered. Kimmel's wife vehemently protested that her husband could not possibly have committed suicide, claiming that he had on numerous occasions told her that he was 'threatened with murder' and had 'also begged me several times not to walk next to him fearing that I might by mistake be killed by the bullet meant for him.' Mrs Kimmel ended her plea by expressing 'hope that the Customs administration whose loyal and zealous servant my husband had always been will get to the truth of the matter in order to rehabilitate the memory of a man who never thought of committing suicide'.[137] The Inspectorate felt there was sufficient ambiguity surrounding the case to re-assess the verdict, although it was never officially overturned. Affairs of this type were rare, yet such cases were conspicuous and brought the Customs unwelcome publicity. Association with unpleasant and inscrutable incidents such as this did nothing to help the Customs' reputation.[138]

The Inspectorate's attitude towards the private lives of its foreign employees, then, remained equivocal throughout the Service's existence. One the one hand, the Service realised that constant and undisguised interventions in the off-duty world of Customs men were unacceptable and would breed discontent. However, the private conduct of employees, operating largely outside of official Service controls, often became a source of anxiety for the Inspectorate. In the confined environs of treaty port foreign society private conduct swiftly became public knowledge; the boundaries between a man's private behaviour and official reputation, therefore, could easily become blurred. If a Customs man transgressed too far from social norms in his personal affairs, in a way which threatened to damage the Service's reputation, the Inspectorate was quick to intercede. Although the Outdoor and Marine Staff carried the least import in treaty port society they were also the most likely to transgress and their personal lives were therefore subject to greater strictures and scrutiny. It was

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[137] CSA, 679(9) 1422, 'Staff Secretary's office: semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1933'. Letter from Antonia Kimmel to the IG enclosed in semi-official letter, Staff Secretary Hu to Commissioner Klubien, Canton, 10 April 1933. Mrs Kimmel claimed that because two shots had been fired in the building where the Kimmels lived, one of which was fired into the home of the Japanese consul on the floor below, Kimmel must have been murdered.

[138] Another incident of this type occurred in 1932 when two foreign Lightkeepers, Edwards and Andreyanow, and their families were kidnapped by communist troops from the Breaker Point lightstation and held to ransom. Although the Lightkeepers' families were released, the Customs refused to pay the full ransom and both men were eventually killed by their captors. See CSA, 679(1) 32370, 'Swatow semi-official, 1931-32', semi-official correspondence between Commissioner Fletcher and IG Maze, March-October 1932.

assumed that Indoor men, on the other hand, could be trusted to adroitly and discreetly regulate their private lives. Staff in *all* branches were, however, aware that their off-duty conduct was surveyed by the Inspectorate and that personal lapses into bad behaviour could have serious consequences for their careers.

Conclusion

Making and maintaining reputations—both of individuals and of entire societies or organisations— amounted almost to an obsession in 'white' communities and overseas administrative services throughout the empire world. [139] Any undermining of a society's standards threatened to undermine 'white prestige' and was, therefore, a source of much anxiety for settler communities and colonial officials. Safeguarding the Service's reputation was also a central preoccupation for the Customs. The Customs, however, was less concerned with preserving 'white prestige' than with upholding the Customs' good name. Employees who let the Customs side down through their off-duty behaviour threatened to de-legitimise the whole Customs venture. While officially claiming reluctance to become enmeshed in the personal lives of employees, then, the Inspectorate quietly policed the off-duty conduct of its foreign staff through a series of official regulations and strictures and through occasional interventions in the personal and domestic affairs of its employees. Staff were, however, able to transgress certain social taboos, such as sexual contact with Chinese women, providing that they were contravened discreetly and without publicly offending the delicate sensibilities of foreign society. Once private indiscretions threatened to become matters for public discussion the Service would intervene. In short, then, the private and social lives of the foreign staff were required to work in the Service' s interests. In this sense, Customs men were never strictly off-duty.

Although colonial arrivism was derided by contemporary commentators such as Maugham, colonial social life is what feeds much empire nostalgia. In the archives of overseas services such as the Customs, however, a different, rather more desperate, tale is told, one which brings to light the social anxieties and failures of some individuals. The case of the Customs foreign staff serves to remind us that the experience of living in the non-European world for Westerners depended very much upon the social status held by individuals or groups. All foreigners received a boost in social status on arrival in China by virtue of their race, yet class lines and social divisions ran deep within foreign communities and were fiercely protected. The Customs foreign staff was no different. Whilst Indoor men mixed with the treaty port elite, Outdoor and Marine men, unless high-ranking, were allocated a low position on

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[139] See McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies*.

the social scale. In many ways these social distinctions provided the Outdoor and Marine staff with greater social and personal opportunities in China. Being of little importance to elite foreign society and to the Inspectorate itself they were also subject to fewer constraints and could, therefore, cross social boundaries by, for example, socialising with or marrying Chinese women. Transgressions on the part of Indoor men, in their position as guardians of the Customs' reputation, were taken more seriously, yet they were also trusted to manage their off-duty lives appropriately and discreetly. All employees, but especially Indoor men, were required to remember that in their social and private lives, as well as in their professional lives, they were first and foremost Customs men.

Chapter Five

Leaving the Service: 'Home', Identity and Post-Customs Lives

In 1945 Bill Scott, a British Lighthouse Mechanic who had worked for the Customs since 1924, left China and the Service for good. Scott had enjoyed his time in China and after twenty years in the country had come to look upon it as home. To supplement his Customs income Scott had even invested in a ten-room property at Peitaiho in Hebei province, which his wife Edith ran as a guesthouse. Sensing impending trouble in 1941 Scott sent his wife and three children to Victoria, Canada, where Edith intended to establish another guesthouse. Scott, however, still pinning his hopes of a prosperous future on China, elected to stay behind. Like others amongst his colleagues in the Lights Staff, rather than being dismissed in December 1941 along with most other British and American Customs employees, Scott's services were retained until May 1942. In January 1943, however, like many other Customs men of Allied nationality in occupied China, he was interned by the Japanese and shunted between five different camps before the end of the war. On his release in 1945 Scott found that he had been paid off by the Customs during internment in July 1943, yet he was nonetheless reluctant to leave and spent six months looking for work in China. His search, however, proved fruitless. Although the Customs re-employed a select cohort of foreign employees in 1945, Scott was not among them and there were few alternative job openings for a foreigner in post-war China. Demoralised, Scott made his way to Canada to rejoin his family, yet the years of separation had taken their toll and he and Edith soon divorced. Scott, however, who no longer experienced any strong ties to Britain, decided to stay and make a fresh start in Canada where, in an intriguing change of career, he became a pawnbroker.[1]

Needless to say, the end of a Customs career held different meanings and consequences for different people, dependent upon their nationality, length of service, mode of withdrawal, position in the Customs and personal ambitions. Even bearing this multiplicity of experiences in mind, however, Scott's story of leaving the Service shares characteristics with and highlights several dilemmas common to the experiences of countless other foreign Customs employees, especially those forced

[1] For the story of Scott's life and career see his biography: Gould, *The Lighthouse Philosopher.*

out of the Customs in the 1940s. For long-serving employees such as Scott withdrawal from service was a watershed moment, more often than not accompanied by relocation, to their 'home' nation or elsewhere, and sometimes by the need to find an entirely new career. Depending on the personal and political circumstances surrounding it, moreover, the transition to a new life could be intensely disappointing. In particular, the drop in social status and income experienced by almost all those returning home after colonial careers was disheartening. As David Cannadine has argued, Britons in empire 'sought to replicate Britain's social hierarchy overseas, on account of their *enhanced position within it'*, living at a standard well above that which they would have been entitled to at home.[2] In the colonies Westerners enjoyed enhanced prestige because of their whiteness, yet at home, as Elizabeth Buettner has observed, 'they shared this symbol of imperial privilege with nearly everyone'.[3] More optimistically, leaving the Service was often also accompanied by long-awaited reunions with friends and family, although, as in Scott's case, domestic fantasies frequently remained unfulfilled.

The post-Service lives and destinations of foreign Customs employees also hint at the broader question of belonging, an issue which encircles wider debates about the nature of identity in the empire world. Circular migrations around the globe challenged national loyalties, sometimes intensifying them and sometimes sidelining them in favour of local identities. It is difficult to reach a conclusive answer to the complicated question of where and what 'home' was to Customs men. For Scott, post-war Britain no longer spoke of 'home' after such a long absence and settling down in China was no longer a realistic proposition in 1945. Such uncertain or conflicting ideas of home were common to migrant communities across the empire world. White settler communities, migrants moving to the metropole or between colonies, and colonial officials all felt the emotional pull of 'home' from multiple places—from their specific local groupings, from a national homeland, from the empire world and from their adopted country of residence.[4]

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[2] Cannadine, *Ornamentalism,* p. 130.

[3] Buettner, *Empire Families,* p. 199. For an analysis of the traditionally neglected racial category of whiteness in Britain see Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class.*

[4] Some examples of discussions of colonial migration and identity are: Marina Carter, *Voices from Indenture: Experiences of Indian Migrants in the British Empire* (London, 1996), Chapter Five, 'New Horizons: The World Beyond Indenture,' pp. 183-227; and, Alison Blunt, '"Land of our Mothers': Home, Identity, and Nationality for Anglo-Indians in British India, 1919-1947', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 54 (2002), pp. 49-72.

The circumstances under which employees left the Service and the course of their post-Customs lives also sheds light upon the original expectations employees entertained of their careers, and how their initial intentions towards the Service played out over the course of a career. Long-term employees who reached the highest ranks had usually planned to make a life-long career out of the Customs from the beginning, whereas those who moved on to more financially-gratifying posts in China after a brief sojourn in the Customs had most likely viewed the Service as a short-term measure from the start. Equally numerous were those employees who aimed for a successful career in the Service yet sadly failed to shine, and those who had hoped to move on to a career with brighter prospects but still found themselves trapped in the Customs twenty years later. The endpoint of Customs careers and final appraisals of lives spent in China speak of a full spectrum of successes and failures.

This chapter, then, will first examine the reasons for and processes of leaving the Service. Such a socially and nationally diverse body of men as the foreign staff inevitably harboured multiple motivations for choosing to leave the Service, all of which shed light upon the career expectations and life choices of the individuals concerned. Particular attention will be paid to instances of international conflict or political upheaval which prompted mass withdrawals from the Service. Secondly, I will assess the post-Customs obligations of the Inspectorate towards its former employees and their families, particularly in terms of the retirement benefits offered to them. Lastly, I will turn to the post-Service lives of foreign employees, considering their geographical and professional destinations after the Customs. Details about post-Customs lives are sparse, yet those which do exist shed much light on the loyalties, identities and commitments of Customs men.

1) Reasons for leaving

Resignations

Resignation was by far the most common mode of leaving the Service in all branches of the foreign staff, amounting to 4,166 or thirty-eight percent of all foreign withdrawals over the course of the Inspectorate's lifespan. Reasons for resigning were manifold, including homesickness, family commitments, simple unsuitability for life and work in China, or the offer of more lucrative employment. Moreover, just as their professional and social experiences diverged, patterns of leaving the Service were different for the Indoor and 'outdoor' branches. The Outdoor Staff were especially susceptible to the lure of other employment options in China, which often far outshone the Customs, and the majority resigned after a short stay in the Service. A significant number of employees, disillusioned with what the Service had to offer, left through less official routes. 326 men were rather ominously recorded as having 'disappeared' and another seventy were recorded as having 'left without permission'. Indoor men, who planned for a career in the Service and were more thoroughly immersed in Customs culture and ethos from the start, only accounted for seventeen of these 396 'unofficial' withdrawals.

The Inspectorate was plagued by the short-term pattern of 'outdoor' employment from its earliest days. The blame for the high staff turnover lay mainly with the poor pay and benefits offered to the 'outdoor' branches, as discussed in Chapter Three. As early as 1886, on receiving an IG directive instructing him to recruit foreign Watchers on wages of $40 per month, the exasperated Shanghai Commissioner complained that the terms offered were just 'not good enough' and warned that Watchers, 'like the members of the Shanghai Police Force, will be anxious to move on as soon as they discover that their pay is insufficient'. Under present pay and conditions, the Commissioner warned, the only willing candidates would be 'the utterly needy who arrive here nobody hardly knows how and who disappear after a few months as mysteriously as they arrived'.[5] This situation did not improve with time and almost forty years later, in 1929, the Shanghai Commissioner was still complaining that most Outdoor men 'would have no compunction in leaving

[5] CSA, 679(2) 1588, 'Shanghai Customs: dispatches to IG, 1886', dispatch no. 400, Commissioner Fitz-Roy, Shanghai, to Hart, 15 May 1886. The Shanghai Commissioner claimed that Customs pay for Watchers was even lower than that offered to second and third officers by steamer companies, who paid at least $35 per month with a $30 half-yearly bonus.

if anything better was offered'.[6] Unfortunately, at this stage, when foreign recruitment under normal terms and conditions had ceased, any changes to Outdoor pay and conditions would come too late to attract a better standard of recruits.

More dramatic were the mass resignations which occurred across all branches at times of international crisis. On the eve of the First World War in August 1914 1,595 foreign employees were recorded as working for the Service, yet 943 foreign nationals withdrew from service between August 1914 and October 1918. Most of those who left promptly signed up with the armed forces on returning home. Resignation accounted for 530 men, fifty-five left without permission, seventy-six were discharged, and a further 146 of these withdrawals are accounted for by the Germans and Austrians whose names were 'removed from the Service List' in 1917 as enemy nationals. By way of contrast, 1,308 Chinese employees were recorded as working for the Service in August 1914 and only 200 had withdrawn from service by the end of the war.[7] It was at times like this that the problems inherent in engaging a multinational staff, who were quick to abandon their Customs commitments in a blaze of patriotism, became clear. The Inspectorate was sympathetic to the quandary of its foreign employees during World War I, despite the difficulties it faced in the form of depleting staff numbers. All those who returned to China after the war—excepting the Germans and Austrians—were re-employed at the rank they occupied before resigning, and a publication listing all those employees who had served in the armed forces during the war was compiled in 1921 as a testimony to the valour of the Customs staff.[8]

In 1939, the Inspectorate was more cautious. Urging restraint to all employees 'anxious to join the colours', Maze counselled that 'while fully recognising the spirit and sentiments evinced, I think it advisable to state that before definite steps are taken in the matter, the views and requirements of their respective governments should be ascertained'.[9] Rather than charging off to join the war Maze instead expected 'every member of our cosmopolitan staff to adhere to the ancient traditions of the Service

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[6] CSA, 679(1) 15019, 'Recruiting of 10 foreign Tidewaiters, 1929', dispatch no. 22,799, Commissioner Myers, Shanghai, to Maze, 15 July 1929.
[7] Figures derived from Service Lists database of employees withdrawn from service.
[8] See CSA, 679(1) 14987, 'Re-appointment of staff to service after war withdrawal', and *War: 1914-1918. Record of Services given and Honours attained by Members of the Chinese Customs Service* (Shanghai, 1922).
[9] CSA, 679(1) 15226, 'Withdrawal of foreign employees for service in European War of 1939', circular no. 5,747, 4 September 1939.

and respect its international status'. The IG was evidently wary of endorsing a mass exodus of those foreign employees still remaining in 1939, which in addition to impairing Customs operations would weaken the British position in China. Coast Inspector Carrel echoed the fears of the wider British establishment when he warned that:

> There can be no doubt that a large number of Britishers are filling important posts in many parts of the world and here in China wholesale abandonment of their jobs would not be of any great material assistance to Great Britain in the prosecution of the present war but might have quite disastrous effects in regard to the position of the British nationals here in the future.[10]

Patriotism could be misplaced if there was no one left to defend foreign China, and other British-run organisations in China—notably the SMP—also tried to persuade their employees to stay put.[11] Wartime withdrawals highlight the complexity of the foreign staff's loyalties: China and the Customs were rarely top of the list of the foreign staff's allegiances, and in moments of international crisis national loyalties always trumped Customs commitments.

Dismissals and discharges

The second most common mode of withdrawal amongst the foreign staff was dismissal or discharge from the Service. During the Foreign Inspectorate's history 852 foreign employees were dismissed and another 1,502 were discharged, usually as a result of misconduct or incompetence.[12] A further 1,113 foreign employees were 'paid off', sometimes simply because their services were no longer needed and sometimes because the employees in question proved unsatisfactory. Moreover, just as international conflict precipitated mass resignations from the Service, it could also provide a premise for group dismissals of employees who happened to be of the wrong nationality. The first case of this kind was the dismissal of 146 Germans and Austrians in August 1917 after China joined the war on the side of the Allies which, added to the 102 who had previously withdrawn from service through other modes since the beginning of the war, eliminated the German and Austrian presence in the Customs for good.[13] One of the largest national contingents in the Customs and one

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[10] CSA, 679(1) 1000, 'Confidential C.I. to and from Commissioners and senior marine officers', confidential letter, Coast Inspector Carrel to River Inspector Munby, 21 September 1939.
[11] See Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, pp. 297-99, for efforts to persuade Shanghai policemen to stay put.
[12] See Chapter Three for a discussion of the prevalence of malpractice and misconduct in the foreign staff, often resulting in discharge or dismissal.
[13] Figures derived from service lists database of employees withdrawn from service.

of the national groups with the most political sway in China was thus removed in one fell swoop, effecting a dramatic change to the face of the foreign staff. This incident, which explicitly excluded an entire national group from serving in the Customs, threw the Service dictum of cosmopolitan cooperation and disinterested service into crisis.

For the individuals concerned the events of 1917 were life-changing. Most Germans in China were eventually repatriated—although those who had served for over twenty years in the Customs were permitted to stay in China— returning to their homeland jobless and sometimes penniless. In the months after the dismissals the Inspectorate received a deluge of letters from angry and desperate German former employees still resident in China whose hopes of a long-lasting career had been dashed by their dismissal. 'We, and those depending on us, are left thereby more or less destitute and are compelled to live in a manner not becoming men who have for long years served you and our Service most faithfully and loyally,' declared a petition from six German former Customs men submitted in 1917. It was only fair, the petitioners argued, that the Customs should issue compensation for their unexpected dismissals.[14] Those German ex-employees who had been stationed at Qingdao prior to the declaration of war bore the brunt of the hardship. A pitiful letter from former Chief Assistant B, C. Pape, claimed that all his belongings were 'lost at Tsingtao [Qingdao], where my own house was burned down, and practically the whole of my household effects, furniture, curios, clothing etc. was lost through the repeated plundering of my Service house'.[15] Looting German homes was routine practice in Qingdao after it fell to the Japanese in 1915 and those stationed there were left with virtually nothing.

For others the simple fact of unexpectedly losing their employment was the most devastating consequence of the dismissals. Four German and Austrian Commissioners writing to Aglen in October 1917 argued that they were 'entitled to special treatment' in view of the fact that the Customs had been 'the life career of us all'.[16] A further petition forwarded from Hamburg in 1923 on behalf of a group of

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[14] CSA, 679(1) 15655, 'Questions relating to German and Austrian members of Service upon declaration of war on Germany and Austria-Hungary by China, 1917', petition forwarded in dispatch no. 10,272, Canton Commissioner to IG Aglen, 14 September 1917.
[15] CSA, 679(1) 15655, 'Questions relating to German and Austrian members of Service upon declaration of war on Germany and Austria-Hungary by China, 1917', letter from C. Pape to IG Aglen, 22 September 1917.
[16] CSA, 679(1) 15655, 'Questions relating to German and Austrian members of Service upon declaration of war on Germany and Austria-Hungary by China, 1917', letter from K. Hemeling, H. E. Wolf, E. O. Heis and Wilzer to IG Aglen, 14 October 1917.

German ex-Customs men requesting compensation complained that 'the undersigned, without fault of their own, were suddenly deprived of their livelihood and lost a career which has generally been considered, and was looked upon by themselves, the career of a lifetime'.[17] Aglen had sympathised from the start of the conflict with the plight of his German and Austrian employees. In 1914 he had written to German Commissioner Wilzer, then stationed in Qingdao; 'It is a thousand pities it [the war] could not be confined to Europe but must invade the Far East where our countries have so many mutual interests and where we English have so many German personal friends'.[18] All he managed to secure in the way of compensation, however, was a relief fund, established in 1923, to assist former German and Austrian employees still resident in China who were unable to find new careers as a result of ill health or old age. In 1925 there were twenty-five beneficiaries of this fund and the scheme continued until 1931.[19] The vast majority of German and Austrian ex-Customs employees, however, received nothing.

After the Guomindang rise to power the Inspectorate became much more ruthless about removing 'dead wood' from the foreign staff. Like the Sino-foreign Salt Inspectorate the Customs was brought closer under the aegis of the central government after 1928. Although both institutions maintained their semi-autonomy and control over their independent civil service systems, increasing criticism of the foreign character of these bureaucracies from certain quarters of the government meant that those foreign employees who damaged their institution's image of efficiency were liabilities.[20] The Customs had already gone one step further than the Salt Inspectorate in its concessions to the new government when Maze agreed to the termination of foreign recruitment under normal terms and conditions in 1927, and in

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[17] CSA, 679(1) 15655, 'Questions relating to German and Austrian members of Service upon declaration of war on Germany and Austria-Hungary by China, 1917', letter from A. H. Wilzer, K. Tochtermann, P. F. C. Schluter, and H. R. Schweiger to IG Aglen, 20 August 1923.

[18] CSA, 679(1) 32834, IG semi-official letters to general public, vol. 8', letter from IG Aglen to Commissioner Wilzer, Qingdao, 14 August 1914.

[19] CSA, 679(1) 15655, Questions relating to German and Austrian members of Service upon declaration of war on Germany and Austria-Hungary by China, 1917'. On the relief fund also see CSA, 679(9) 3760, 德籍关员退至职等问题有关文件, letter from Stanley Wright to Commissioner Commijs, 8 August 1928. Initially, the government sanctioned the payment of an annual grant of Hk. Tls. 55,000 for the years 1924-6, which was distributed amongst German ex-employees 'in necessitous circumstances'. The Inspectorate managed to stretch the grant out to also cover 1927-8, and then persuaded the Ministry of Finance to renew the grant at a reduced rate for a further three years.

[20] For the Salt Inspectorate's position and operation after 1927 see Strauss, *Strong Institutions in Weak Polities,* Chapter Four, 'The Salt Inspectorate in the Nationalist State: Tensions between Politics and Administration', pp. 80-105.

1929 he set about eliminating all those foreign staff who he considered did not pull their weight as part of the 1929 staff reorganisation. Shanghai Commissioner Myers, one of those delegated to decide who should go and who should stay, was appalled by the dubious ethics of discharging long-serving employees simply because the Service had no more use for them. Myers protested that, 'the summary listing and discharge of men, especially those who have served loyally, if not with great effect, 20-30 years already, without giving them a reasonable warning that they are liable to fall under consideration for discharge, is at variance with past Service principles'.[21] Myers' remonstrations were, however, to no avail; forty-eight employees were paid off in 1930 and twenty-seven in 1931, as compared with only one in 1929. Forty-nine of these seventy-five employees had served for over twenty years in the Customs.[22] In the new order of things, however, there was no room for compassion when dealing with those who no longer served Customs interests.

On 8 December 1941 the Inspectorate fell to the Japanese and then operated under the jurisdiction of the collaborationist Wang Jingwei government for the duration of the war.[23] The Japanese takeover effected an immediate and dramatic change to the profile of the foreign staff. Maze was dismissed as IG and replaced by Customs Chief Secretary Kishimoto Hirokichi on 11 December and in a mass dismissal, which echoed the elimination of Germans and Austrians from Service ranks in 1917, the names of 221 British and American employees were removed from the service lists as enemy subjects on 13 December. Although foreign privilege in China had been chipped away at since the mid-1920s, many employees had still clung to the hope of a continuing career in the Service.[24] Maze's announcement to a meeting of the foreign staff at the Shanghai Customs Club on 17 December 1941 that all employees of Allied nationality in ports under Japanese control were to be dismissed

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[21] CSA, 679(1) 31639, 'IG Confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1929', confidential letter, Commissioner Myers, Shanghai, to IG Maze, 31 October 1929. The 1929 decision to dismiss ineffective employees was a departure from past policy. In 1888, for example, the question of what to do with aging boatmen who could no longer perform their work properly was solved by finding less demanding jobs for them in the Customs. See CSA, 679(2) 1830, 'Swatow Customs: Dispatches from IG, 1886-88', Swatow dispatch no. 571, 22 October 1888.

[22] Figures derived from service lists database of employees withdrawn from service.

[23] For an overview of the policies and character of the Wang Jingwei government see David P. Barrett, 'The Wang Jingwei Regime, 1940-1945: Continuities and Disjunctures with Nationalist China', in David P. Barrett and Larry N. Shyu (eds.), *Chinese Collaboration with Japan, 1932-1945: The Limits of Accommodation* (Stanford CA, 2001), pp. 102-15.

[24] For the dismantling of the foreign presence in China since the late 1920s see Bickers, *Britain in China,* Chapter Four, 'Dismantling Informal Empire'. For an illustration of the position of the foreign nationals, and particularly the situation of foreign policemen, in wartime Shanghai see Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, Chapter Eleven, 'Aftermath', pp. 290-327.

was, therefore, met with anger and incredulity. Marine Assistant Owen Gander, one of those present, queried 'why the position of foreigners in the Service should have been affected by the political situation' when previous upheavals had 'made no difference to the situation in respect of Customs employees, foreign or Chinese'. There was, he wrote, a widespread feeling that the foreign staff had been 'sold down the river' by the Customs.[25] Yet, however reluctant Gander and his colleagues were to recognise it, Pearl Harbor had changed everything and the post-1941 Foreign Inspectorate was working in a very different environment to any it had previously encountered, one which would irrevocably change the face of the Customs staff.

Worse was to come. Those employees of Allied nationalities who decided to stay in occupied China after 1941, or else could not get out, faced internment after 31 January 1943. On 12 January 1942 a second Inspectorate was established from scratch at Chongqing, headed first by officiating IG C. H. B. Joly, then by Maze followed by Deputy IG Ting Kwei-tang between March and August 1943, and finally by Little from August 1943. The Chongqing Inspectorate ran parallel to the Kishimoto Inspectorate until the end of the war. In July 1943, eighty-six interned British and American employees were compulsorily retired by the Chongqing Inspectorate, most of whom did not realise they were unemployed until their release from captivity in 1945.[26] As a result, by July 1944 Little was responsible for a foreign staff of only eighteen, alongside 4,500 Chinese, in the whole of free China.[27] After the war betrayal was the word on the lips of those who, unbeknownst to them, had been paid off whilst in captivity. Former Commissioner E. A. Pritchard, in particular, was livid at his treatment at the hands of the Customs. In a letter to Little he wrote; 'May I picture in a nutshell how we see things at present. We stuck to our posts; as a result we have lost *everything* we possess, we have endured 3 ½ years of hell, some of us have learned we were paid off during the height of our misery'. 'I am simply horrified and amazed that my services are so lightly esteemed by China', Pritchard concluded.[28] Little replied that he was doing all he could, but that he could not force

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[25] Imperial War Museum Archives, Owen D. Gander papers, 86/44/1, manuscript diary, vol. 1, diary entry on 28 January 1942.
[26] See Little papers, FMS Am 1999.3, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1946', circular no. 610, 20 September 1943 for details of the plan to pay off employees in captivity.
[27] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.1, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1941-44', *The Chinese Maritime Customs Service*, 6 July 1944.
[28] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.2, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1945,' letter from E. A. Pritchard, Hong Kong, to IG Little, 20 September 1945.

the government's hand. In any case, as Little himself was quick to point out in response to the constant haranguing of former Customs men, 'most of my problems are legacies' inherited from his predecessor Frederick Maze who had singularly failed to make provision for these eventualities.[29]

Little was left to pick up the pieces and matters slowly began to be resolved. It was decided that those who had resigned for war service prior to 1941, and therefore avoided internment, would be re-employed with seniority after reporting for duty in China after 1945.[30] In 1946, moreover, Pritchard's indignation was assuaged when the government elected to retroactively issue full pay for the period of internment to all employees compulsorily retired in July 1943.[31] Not all employees were happy with their post-war treatment by the Customs, however. Pensions were a long time coming to those men who had been compulsorily retired, and some employees were never permitted to rejoin. The Japanese staff moreover, in the largest Customs mass dismissal yet, were paid off en masse in July 1945. Over one thousand Japanese employees were, therefore, lost, around 640 of whom had been employed by the Customs before Pearl Harbor.[32] The Japanese were, moreover, effectively erased from the Customs record: their dismissals were not recorded in the service lists and, although many were long-serving Customs men, we know very little about them as individuals and as a cohort within the Customs as compared with the rest of the foreign staff. Although 340 foreign nationals remained in the Customs in July 1945, foreign staff numbers had, then, been irreversibly reduced and loyalties had been lost.

Health

Ill-health was a third major cause of withdrawals. Although new recruits were subjected to a rigorous medical examination on joining the Service, many of the foreign staff fell seriously ill after a few years in China. For many, illness had tragic consequences; a high proportion of the foreign staff, 988 in all (nine percent of the total foreign staff), died whilst working for the Customs, as compared with 1,008 Chinese employees (nine percent of the total Chinese staff). Employees who were

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[29] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.1, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1941-44', letter from Little to Commissioners Hopstock, Bairnsfather and Rouse, 8 February 1944.
[30] See CSA, 679(1) 15656, 'General questions concerning staff interned during the Pacific War', for a list of employees who had not been interned and were reemployed after 1945.
[31] CSA, 679(1) 15656, 'General questions concerning staff interned during the Pacific War', semi-official circular no. 178, 23 February 1946.
[32] See Bickers, 'Anglo-Japanese Relations'.

invalided out of the Service were less common; only 268 foreign employees (two percent of the total foreign staff), as compared with 245 Chinese employees (two percent of the total Chinese staff), were invalided out of the Service from the very first invaliding case in 1888 until the end of the Foreign Inspectorate. As the Inspectorate was obliged to issue pro rata retiring allowances to such employees, it preferred to invalid men purely as a last resort, when an employee suffered from chronic and severe health problems which prevented him from performing his work. Furthermore, the cost-conscious Inspectorate took considerable pains to weed out those it suspected of submitting 'false' claims.[33]

Successful applications for invaliding were, therefore, uncommon. Those who did apply were required to submit an initial application to the IG supported by a doctor and then wait for ninety days before a final decision was made by a three-person medical board—in other words, ill employees were given three months to die in before an invaliding could be sanctioned.[34] Most of those who were invalided suffered from fairly commonplace, albeit unfortunate, ailments. Tuberculosis, chronic breathing problems such as bronchitis, heart trouble and rheumatism were the usual complaints. Many employees, and their doctors, viewed their health troubles as a direct result of living in China, especially for those diagnosed with illnesses which fell under the catch-all labels of 'general debility' or 'neurasthenia'. 'Leaving the East', or a sojourn in a more 'temperate' climate such as Japan, was usually the prescribed treatment.[35] Despite the evidence that Japanese employees suffered from

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[33] In 1929, for example, in circular no. 3,987 of 11 October 1929, Maze expressed concern about applications for invaliding being submitted by those 'whose health has been ruined as the direct result of their irregular mode of living'. CSA, 679(1) 16757, 'General regulations governing superannuation and retirement, 1921-47'. In 1929, for example, Examiner Rendle, stationed at Jiujiang, was diagnosed with 'cerebral arteriosclerosis induced by excessive consumption of food and drink and a past case of gonorrhoea' and was reluctantly invalided in October that year by Maze. See CSA, 679(1) 15552, 'Foreign Out-door employees invalided, 1929 (ordinary cases)', Jiujiang dispatch no. 5,604, 30 August 1929.

[34] In circular no. 4,209 of 11 April 1931 Maze voiced concerns about applications 'for the immediate invaliding of employees who evidently were so seriously ill that their death was momentarily expected'. CSA, 679(1) 16757, 'General regulations governing superannuation and retirement, 1921-47. One employee who triumphed over this three-month rule was Examiner Tipman who applied for invaliding when apparently on his deathbed in 1936. During the ninety-day limbo period Tipman made a miraculous recovery—although he was deemed unfit for further service—and he was invalided out of the Service with full benefits. CSA, 679(1) 31973, 'Tientsin semi-officials, 1936', semi-official letter no. 1,111, Commissioner Myers, Tianjin, to IG Maze, 5 December 1936 and semi-official letter, IG Maze to Commissioner Myers, 8 December 1936; CSA, 679(1) 31974, 'Tientsin semi-officials 1937-8', semi-official letter no. 1,115, Commissioner Myers, Tianjin, to IG Maze, 9 January 1937.

[35] For examples of invalided employees who were advised to 'leave the East' see CSA, 679(1) 15552, 'Foreign Out-door employees invalided, 1929,' cases of Appraiser Olsen and Tidewaiter Sharp. See

these same illnesses with the same degree of frequency, theories of white unsuitability for life in China persisted in the minds of Customs men.[36] These fears grew out of a much more complex set of anxieties about contact with the non-Western world than simply a high European death rate. As discussed in Chapter Four, concern about the compatibility of 'Europeans' with the tropical world and climate and a desire to distance white communities from native society, and by implication 'unsanitary' native practices, sparked disquiet about the health dangers of living in non-European countries.[37] High mortality rates amongst Westerners in China partly justified these fears, especially in the nineteenth century when medical facilities in the outports were practically non-existent and sanitation systems were rudimentary at best. In 1858, for example, 706 of the 11,300 Britons living on the China coast died, a ratio of 62.5 per 1,000.[38] As *Table 5.1* shows, mortality rates amongst the foreign staff began to drop in the 1890s and during the 1930s, by which time facilities had been improved at most ports, the death rate was down to approximately three percent of the foreign staff. Yet death rates were equally high in the Chinese staff; the overall mortality rate for both Chinese and foreign employees over the course of the Foreign Inspectorate's existence was nine percent. Although the foreign staff were understandably anxious about the health costs of living in China, its deleterious effects were not limited to Westerners.

Kennedy, *Magic Mountains,* pp. 31-3, for a discussion of the 'colonial condition' of 'debilitation' amongst white communities in the colonial world.

[36] See, for example, amongst others, the cases of Tidesurveyor Otani, invalided in 1927 as a result of his 'articular rheumatism and neurasthenia' and Appraiser Yabashi, invalided in 1930 as a result of his 'asthma, emphysema and tubular bronchitis'. CSA, 679(1) 15,552, 'Foreign Out-door employees invalided, 1929'.

[37] See Philip D. Curtin, *Death by Migration: Europe's Encounter with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1989), for a discussion of changing attitudes towards 'European' health in the tropical world and an analysis of the 'relocation costs' of migration to the non-European world using the records of military doctors.

[38] Figures taken from Kerrie L. Macpherson, *A Wilderness of Marshes: The Origins of Public Health in Shanghai, 1843-1893* (Oxford, 1987), p. 19.

***Table 5.1*- Numbers of staff recorded as deceased per decade (percentage against the total number of foreign or Chinese staff employed by the Service at some point during each decade in parentheses)**

Decade	Foreign staff	Chinese staff
1 Jan 1850- 31 Dec 1859	0	0
1 Jan 1860- 31 Dec 1869	76 (7%)	0
1 Jan 1870- 31 Dec 1879	84 (8%)	5 (2%)
1 Jan 1880- 31 Dec 1889	110 (8%)	58 (10%)
1 Jan 1890- 31 Dec 1899	140 (6%)	106 (11%)
1 Jan 1900- 31 Dec 1909	193 (6%)	220 (8%)
1 Jan 1910- 31 Dec 1919	182 (6%)	198 (10%)
1 Jan 1920- 31 Dec 1929	118 (5%)	199 (6%)
1 Jan 1930- 31 Dec 1939	70 (3%)	180 (4%)
1 Jan 1940- 31 Dec 1949	14 (1%)	42 (1%)

Source- Service Lists database of employees withdrawn from service

As high levels of illness amongst the staff could damage the smooth-running of the Service, nineteen service-listed Customs medical officers were appointed between 1862 and 1900 to provide free consultations for Customs men and their families.[39] These appointments were in keeping with trends in the wider empire world; colonial armed forces, administrative services, and governments all identified a pressing need to appoint Western-trained medical practitioners to service their employees and European populations. The presence of these doctors bolstered the operation of empire through keeping colonial personnel fit and healthy and by asserting what colonial authorities and doctors considered as being the superiority of Western science and medicine over native medical practices.[40] An early Customs surgeon, Patrick Manson (in the Service 1866-89), played a leading role in the pioneering of tropical medicine in the West, later becoming medical advisor to the Colonial Office and a founding member of the School of Tropical Medicine in London.[41] After 1900, however, the usual practice was to place a foreign doctor

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[39] In 1936, for example, the Tianjin Commissioner complained that all senior ranks in the Outdoor Staff at the port were chronically unwell, a situation which was significantly impairing Customs efficiency. See CSA, 679(1) 31661, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1936-37', confidential letter, Commissioner Myers, Tianjin, to IG Maze, 20 November 1936.

[40] See Douglas Haynes, *Imperial Medicine: Patrick Manson and the Conquest of Tropical Disease* (Philadelphia, 2001), 'Introduction: British Medicine as Imperial Medicine', pp. 1-11, for a discussion of the colonial job market for British doctors in the nineteenth century and the cultural implications of British medicine in empire.

[41] See Haynes, *Imperial Medicine*, for Manson's career. Manson was employed by the Customs in Xiamen to examine the crews on incoming Western vessels and to provide medical services to Customs personnel. During his time in China his scientific research led to a major breakthrough in explaining the causes of malaria.

resident in each port under contract to service Customs personnel for a fixed fee.[42] Unfortunately, the standard of health care provided by medical officers was often less than satisfactory and the hospital facilities available in remote ports were woefully inadequate, sometimes with tragic results.[43] In 1929, for example, Examiner dos Santos stationed at Hokow near Mengzi was shunted between doctors and hospitals in Mengzi, Kunming, Hanoi and Macao before a diagnosis was finally reached. It was all to no avail, however, and dos Santos died of liver failure shortly afterwards.[44]

Some men went to considerable lengths to improve their health and salvage their Customs careers. For those who had not yet reached retirement age invaliding, which meant leaving their careers with limited benefits and with little hope of finding other work, was a miserable prospect. One example is the case of Chief Examiner W. M. Komaroff who wrote to Maze in 1930 asking to be invalided because of a chronic heart problem. Two years earlier, instead of returning to his home country, he had travelled to the United States on his long leave 'for the purpose of getting good medical treatment'. After six months of treatment, however, Komoroff was forced to return to work 'owing to financial reasons', despite the fact that his heart specialist had 'questioned the wisdom of my returning to the Orient'. After being transferred to Yunnanfu Komoroff had a relapse during which he 'nearly died', leading him to believe there was no other solution but to leave the Service and seek long-term medical care in Europe.[45] For men such as Komoroff who had envisaged life-long careers in the Service, and whose age and state of health made them unlikely candidates for alternative employment, ill-health dealt a severe blow to their careers

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[42] See CSA, 679(1) 16677, 'Medical attendance: Tientsin, 1909-49', Tianjin dispatch no. 11,014, 20 August 1937, for an example of the regulations governing the employment of medical officers. The medical officers were issued a fixed monthly sum from the Inspectorate, in return for which they were expected to treat all Customs staff and their families.

[43] In 1930 the Inspectorate was forced to pay off the family of Second Assistant B, H. D. Ebey, after the Customs medical officer's 'professional incompetence' contributed to his death from meningitis. CSA, 679(1) 15606, 'Foreign Indoor employees deceased, 1929-30', confidential letter, R. T. Banister to Staff Secretary Lawford, Shanghai, 17 January 1930.

[44] CSA, 679(1) 15608, 'Foreign Out-door employees deceased, 1929', Mengzi dispatch no. 4,490, Commissioner Kremer, Mengzi, to IG Maze, 16 October 1929. Maze was, however, more concerned with the costs accrued by the Service from dos Santos' travels and admonished Kremer for releasing unauthorised travel expenses to him. IG dispatch no. 2,530, Maze to Commissioner Kremer, 31 October 1929.

[45] CSA, 679(1) 15,552, 'Foreign Out-door employees invalided, 1929', letter from W. M. Komoroff to IG Maze, 20 March 1930. A further example is the case of Examiner Martinek, who was also invalided in 1930. Martinek had suffered from a litany of serious health problems since his arrival in China in 1911, yet he persevered for almost twenty years before applying for invaliding. CSA, 679(1) 15,555, 'Foreign Out-door employees invalided, 1930', letter from J. Martinek to Deputy Commissioner Myers, Shanghai, 5 May 1930, enclosed in Shanghai dispatch no. 23,498, 2 June 1930.

and to their future livelihoods. Invaliding was a dreaded final solution and they stayed until breaking point.

The foreign staff in the Nationalist state

Resignations and retirement, ill health, and dismissal or discharge for misconduct or incompetence were the usual reasons for withdrawal from the Customs Service. The foreign staff had its long-serving employees and its transients, its model workers and its reprobates, and the diversity of its personnel was reflected in patterns of leaving the Service. Periodically, however, staff re-shuffles and domestic and international conflict or politic upheavals forced the Inspectorate to make dramatic staff changes and sanction mass dismissals. The formation of the Nationalist state in 1927-28 increased the political accountability of the Foreign Inspectorate, however much it tried to maintain its image as a depoliticised bureaucracy. Maze was no stranger to political manoeuvrings; he secured his appointment to the post of IG in 1929 on the strength of his willingness to swear loyalty and make concessions to the new government.[46] Changes were quick to follow. The cessation of foreign recruitment and accelerated promotion of Chinese employees set the tone for the erosion of the privileged position of the foreign staff.

Although the ultimate success of the Guomindang's centralising impetus is up for debate, it certainly had an immediate effect on the Customs.[47] The Customs, like the Sino-foreign Salt Inspectorate, was incorporated into the Ministry of Finance in 1928 and its supervisory board was downgraded in status from that of a *ju* (the *Shuiwuju* or Revenue Board) to that of a lower status *shu* (the *Guanwushu* or Customs

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[46] See Brunero, *Britain's Imperial Cornerstone in China*, Chapter Four, 'Nationalist Ascendancy and the Politics of being Inspector General', pp. 79-100, for an account of the 1927-29 Customs succession crisis.

[47] Lloyd Eastman, for example, claims that the Nationalist government's efforts to establish centralised administrative control over the provinces and its attempts at institution-building largely failed. See Lloyd Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China under Nationalist Rule, 1927-1937* (Cambridge MA, 1974), Chapter One, '"The Revolution Has Failed"', pp. 1-30, and Eastman, 'Nationalist China during the Nanking Decade 1927-1937', in Eastman, Jerome Ch'en, Suzanne Pepper and Lyman P. Van Slyke (eds.), *The Nationalist Era in China, 1927-1949* (Cambridge MA, 1991), pp. 1-52. By contrast, Robert Bedeski argues that Eastman's assessment is unduly negative and that the Nationalist state achieved a great deal given the difficult circumstances in which it operated, laying the foundations of a modern nation state in China. Robert Bedeski, 'China's Wartime State', in James C. Hsiung and Steven I. Levine (eds.), *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan 1937-1945* (New York, 1992), pp. 33-49. For a more favourable view of Nationalist achievements also see Hung-Mao Tien, *Government and Politics in Kuomintang China, 1927-1937* (Stanford CA, 1972), Chapter Two, 'The Organization of the Regime', pp. 18-72.

Administration).[48] With an outspokenly anti-imperialist government in power and with Customs autonomy eroded many foreign employees were predictably sceptical about the continuing ability of the Service to provide a secure career. Morale suffered as a result. In 1929 Commissioner Howell in Tianjin reported that the junior Assistants in his office were taking a gloomy view of their future prospects in the Service. 'In my opinion it would be a bad thing for the Service to lose them, but if nothing is done to induce them to stay with us I think that they, and probably others like them, will resign during their first leave', Howell forecast.[49] Maze reassured Howell that 'insofar as the existing intention of the Government is concerned, there is no probability that the normal promotion of foreigners in the Customs to the higher ranks will be appreciably retarded by the arrangement according to Chinese equality of opportunity'.[50]

Many remained unconvinced, especially after the staff surplus created by the takeover of the Manchurian Customs stations by the Manzhuguo authorities in 1932 resulted in certain long-serving foreign staff being encouraged to retire.[51] Yet, although many were disaffected by the turn of events in the late 1920s and early 1930s, decades of honing staff loyalty to the Customs did its job, and foreign staff numbers did not fall dramatically. What is more, although the political answerability of the Foreign Inspectorate undoubtedly increased in the 1930s, the Nationalists were forced to square their resentment of a foreign-staffed revenue-collecting institution with their immediate financial needs. The customs revenue was essential to financing the Nationalists' massive military expenditure, foreign and domestic debt service and institution building efforts—customs revenues accounted for 48.5 percent of the central government's income during the years 1928-37—and so the Customs was permitted to operate more or less as usual.[52] The panic, therefore, subsided and there

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[48] The Salt Inspectorate experienced a similar drop in its official status in 1928. See Strauss, *Strong Institutions in Weak Polities*, pp. 84-5.

[49] CSA, 679(1) 31639, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1929', confidential letter, Commissioner Howell, Tianjin, to IG Maze, 29 July 1929. In the same file also see a similar complaint from the Shanghai junior Indoor Staff, confidential letter, IG Maze to Commissioner Myers, Shanghai, 6 July 1929.

[50] CSA, 679(1) 31639, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1929,' confidential letter, IG Maze to Commissioner Howell, Tianjin, 21 August 1929.

[51] For an account of the takeover see *Documents Illustrative*, vol. V, semi-official circular no. 95, 'Manchurian customs: account of seizure of by "Manchukuo" authorities', 20 April 1933.

[52] Figures taken from Tien, *Government and Politics*, p. 78. Other major sources of revenue were the salt revenues and the consolidated taxes. The central government chose to cede control of the land tax—potentially the largest source of government revenue—to the provincial governments until 1942, forcing it to rely on these three sources of revenue for the duration of the Nanjing decade.

were no mass resignations of disillusioned staff. As *Table 2* shows, the size of the foreign staff diminished gradually during the 1930s, in tune with the usual pattern of retirements and resignations.

***Table 5.2*- Numbers of foreign, Japanese and Chinese employees in the Customs 1931-41**

Date	**Non-Japanese foreign employees**	**Japanese employees**	**Chinese employees**
1 July 1931	1,009	205	2,726
1 July 1932	979	198	2,765
1 July 1933	1,003	86[53]	2,749
1 July 1934	1,043	77	2,990
1 July 1935	1,010	71	3,242
1 July 1936	994	69	3,498
1 July 1937	956	83	3,743
1 July 1938	914	269[54]	3,713
1 July 1939	862	541	3,778
1 July 1940	824	553	3,883
1 July 1941	780	612	3,893

***Table 5.3*- Numbers of foreign, Japanese and Chinese employees in the Customs 1942-49[55]**

Date	**Non-Japanese foreign employees**	**Japanese employees**	**Chinese employees**
1 July 1942	515	765	4,324
1 July 1943	481	873	4,261
1 July 1944*	345	1,001	4,088
1 July 1945*	340	1,001	4,112
1 July 1946	311	0	4,166
1 July 1947	323	0	4,510
1 July 1948	303	0	4,656
1 July 1949	289	0	4,627

Source- Service lists database of employees withdrawn from service

*These figures are approximate as the service list for the period July 1944- July 1945 is missing (or was never published)

All this was to change in December 1941. Maze had worked hard to maintain what he saw as Customs integrity after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937,

[53] The dramatic drop in the numbers of Japanese employed by the Customs in 1933 is a result of the Japanese takeover of the Manchurian Customs stations in 1932. These stations and their Japanese staff were thereafter no longer controlled by the Inspectorate. See Bickers, 'Anglo-Japanese Relations and Treaty Port China'.

[54] The sharp rise in Japanese staff numbers here is a result of increasing Japanese pressure to appoint Japanese nationals to the Service from 1938 onwards. As Japanese forces pressed forward in China Maze was inundated with demands for increased Japanese representation. See Bickers, 'Anglo-Japanese Relations and Treaty Port China'.

[55] The figures in this table are approximate because the Chongqing Inspectorate service list for July 1942- July 1943 is missing and therefore foreign withdrawals during this period are not recorded in the database. Similarly, the Kishimoto Inspectorate service list for July 1944-July 1945 is missing, as is the 1949 service list. All employees still in the Service in 1949 are, therefore, recorded in the database as having withdrawn from service in February 1950.

although this unfortunately meant that he had made no provision for the likely eventuality that the Inspectorate and its staff would be taken over by the Japanese.[56] From January 1942 the Chongqing Inspectorate was forced to operate with a meagre staff assembled from those employees who remained in free China whilst the Kishimoto Inspectorate retained the services of 1,000 Japanese, 100 foreigners of neutral nationality, and most Chinese. In September 1942 the Chongqing Inspectorate received a further blow to its status when it was forced to comply with the 1938 Public Treasury Law, which required all government organisations to submit their revenues in their entirety to the Treasury. Whereas the Customs had previously worked out its own budget, which it appropriated directly from the Customs revenues, it was now issued with a budget and funds by the Ministry of Finance, meaning a complete loss of its financial semi-autonomy.[57]

The wider China context was also discouraging. The intensification of the War of Resistance from December 1941 onwards and the growing economic, bureaucratic and political weakness of the Nationalist government meant that the Chongqing Inspectorate was working under increasingly difficult conditions.[58] The Sino-British and Sino-American Friendship Treaties of January 1943, moreover, dismantled the props of informal empire in China, abolishing extraterritorality and the remaining foreign concessions.[59] The outlook, then, was bleak for both foreign China and the Foreign Inspectorate and many employees were demoralised as a result.

Nevertheless, between September 1945 and the Foreign Inspectorate's end 479 foreign nationals are recorded as having worked for the Service. The character of the foreign staff had undoubtedly altered—around 138 of the post-war foreign staff were new appointees to the technical and marine branches of the Service, employed on short-term contracts, who had not previously worked for the Customs. The foreign

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[56] See Clifford, 'Sir Frederick Maze and the Chinese Maritime Customs', for a favourable assessment of Maze's attempts to preserve Customs integrity 1937-41. See Bickers, 'The American IG', for a discussion of Maze's wartime manoeuvrings.

[57] IG circular no. 287, Chongqing Inspectorate Series, 14 September 1942.

[58] For a discussion of the increasing challenges faced by the Nationalist government after 1941 see Hans J. van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925-1945* (London, 2003), Chapter Seven, 'Wartime Mobilisation', pp. 252-93

[59] For the end of British dominance in Shanghai see Robert Bickers, 'Settlers and Diplomats: The End of British Hegemony in the International Settlement, 1937-1945', in Christian Henriot and Wen-Hsin Yeh (eds.), *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai under Japanese Occupation* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 229-56. For the dismantling of the French concession in Shanghai see, in the same volume, Christine Cornet, 'The Bumpy End of the French Concession and French Influence in Shanghai, 1937-1946', pp. 257-76. For the British government's policy towards its China interests at the beginning of the War of Resistance see Bradford A. Lee, *Britain and the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1939* (Stanford CA, 1973).

staff profile had not, however, changed as dramatically as we might think, with the notable exception of the elimination of the Japanese presence in the Service. In the post-war period around 340 foreign employees who had been employed prior to the conflict remained. Approximately 240 of these had been appointed to the Service before the suspension of foreign recruitment in 1927, perhaps with long careers in mind.[60] Those who belonged to this long-serving cohort of foreign staff were understandably concerned about their futures in the Service. In addition to orchestrating the recovery of ports which had fallen to Japan in 1937 and the Manchurian ports seized in 1931-32, Little also had the difficult job of boosting morale amongst his foreign staff whilst still maintaining a realistic outlook about the uncertain future of the Inspectorate. In 1944 Little had insisted that his foreign staff had no need to fear dismissal claiming, like Maze before him, that 'the Ministry have expressed the belief that the trained foreign staff of the Customs will be of great value to China during the post-war reconstruction period'.[61] The staff took some convincing but they had been instilled with the belief that they were different and separate from the imperialist presence in China from the start of their careers and were in no hurry to leave China just yet.

Until 1949, however, Little was required again and again to allay his staff's fears of imminent dismissal. The IG was adamant that these worries were completely unfounded, protesting in 1946 that 'so far as promotions are concerned, no foreign member of the staff has been discriminated against, sidetracked or ignored'.[62] Later in the year, seven foreign Commissioners, sensing that their days in the Service were numbered, demanded that 'immediate consideration be given to paying off the entire foreign staff of the Service', with full pension benefits, in view of 'the natural dislike of the anomaly of foreigners occupying positions of administrative and executive authority in a Chinese civil service'.[63] The Commissioners' request was not granted, and most of the petitioners remained in the Service until the bitter end. The Outdoor Staff, too, suffered from post-war anxiety about their future in the Service and requested a fundamental change in their role. The increasing use of the Chinese

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[60] Figures derived from service lists database of employees withdrawn from service.
[61] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.1, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1941-44', confidential letter, IG Little, to Commissioners Hopstock, Bairnsfather and Rouse, 8 February 1944.
[62] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.3, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1946', dispatch no. 35,036, IG Little to Commissioner Pritchard, Shanghai, 2 July 1946.
[63] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.3, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1946', petition from seven foreign Commissioners, 4 November 1946.

language to conduct Customs business left many foreigners floundering, according to an Outdoor Staff petition submitted in 1946, and the Outdoor Staff had come to feel 'that their work should be of a consultative, advisory and instructive nature and that the Chinese should be in the forefront and taking the responsibility'.[64] Little replied that he was 'no prophet' and that Chinese officials were unenthusiastic about plans to pay off the entire foreign staff with benefits.[65] Although the fate of the foreign staff was ultimately determined by the Communist revolution in 1949, post-war uncertainties meant that the majority of foreign employees soon began looking for a viable exit from the Service after being re-employed in 1945.[66] In the 1940s the profile of the foreign staff had fundamentally changed, as had the political and economic circumstances the Inspectorate was working under, and the pattern of staff withdrawals changed with it.

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[64] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.4, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1946', personal letter, Commissioner Newman, Amoy, to IG Little, 15 September 1946, enclosing a petition from the Amoy Outdoor Staff.

[65] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.4, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1946', personal letter, IG Little to Commissioner Newman, Amoy, 26 September 1946.

[66] For an account of the final years of the foreign presence in China, and of the fate of foreign nationals resident there, see Beverly Hooper, *China Stands Up: Ending the Western Presence, 1948-1950* (Sydney, 1986), especially Chapter Five, 'Foreign Nationals', pp. 71-84.

2) Benefits and post-Service rewards

Regular pensions for Customs staff were a long time in coming, not appearing until Aglen instituted a superannuation and retirement scheme in February 1920. The only concession the Inspectorate made towards retirement allowances in the 1860s was the issue of six months' pay for every five years served to foreign Indoor employees and Tidesurveyors who were forced to resign due to ill-health.[67] Junior Outdoor men and those who left the Service for other reasons, however, received nothing. Hart had deflected early calls for pensions with the assertion that it was the responsibility of all employees to plan sensibly for their futures. 'There is no class in the service in which the individual cannot save money, and, without either parsimonious frugality or excessive asceticism, any member of the staff ought to be able to retire after twenty-five or thirty years service, and before the age of fifty with a sufficient sum in hand to furnish him with a fair income at home', was Hart's stern rebuttal to requests for a pensions scheme in 1869.[68] Retirement benefits were grudgingly improved in 1876 through a scheme which issued one year's pay at the end of every seventh year of service to the Indoor Staff and one year's pay every ten years to the Outdoor, Coast and Marine Staffs in the naïve hope that this would enable employees to save for their retirement. In the eyes of senior staff, those who squandered their extra pay through 'individual extravagance' only had themselves to blame.[69]

The Customs lagged a long way behind other overseas services in its unwillingness to issue regular pensions to its staff. Long-serving ICS officers were guaranteed an annual pension of £1,000, irrespective of rank, from the service's inception in 1858 and SPS retirees had also been entitled to draw a pension since the formation of the service in 1899.[70] In 1920, however, the time was deemed right to reward long-serving Customs staff with regular pensions, although the scheme was not over-generous. Retirement allowances consisted of an annuity benefit purchased

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[67] *Documents Illustrative,* vol. I, circular no. 26 of 1870 (first series), 'Retiring allowances, retention in Service, rules regarding', 31 December 1870. The same benefits had been issued to junior Outdoor Staff between September 1867 and November 1869, but this ruling was rescinded by circular no. 25 of 1869.

[68] *Documents Illustrative,* vol. I, circular no. 25 of 1869 (first series), 'Service re-organisation, regulations and explanations', 1 November 1869, p. 157.

[69] *Documents Illustrative,* vol. I, circular no. 5 of 1876 (second series), 'Retiring allowances: new rules', 5 June 1876, pp. 362-3.

[70] Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, p. 109 and p. 184.

in gold from Service funds equal to one quarter of the employee's final salary and a refund of compulsory deductions from his salary which, it was estimated, would be approximately equal to the sum required to purchase an annuity of the same amount. Retirees, then, would receive a yearly sum equivalent to half their final salary. Although they were compulsorily retired at the age of sixty, however, foreign Indoor men were only entitled to full pension benefits after a long slog of forty years' service, and Outdoor, Coast, Marine and Works employees after thirty-five years.[71]

The long length of service required to earn full pension benefits was a cause of contention from the scheme's inauguration.[72] In this respect, Customs pension eligibility requirements *did* compare unfavourably with those stipulated by other overseas services. The ICS only required a period of twenty-five to thirty-five years service before its officers were eligible for a pension and compulsory retirement took place at the age of fifty in the SPS.[73] Always motivated by financial stringency in issuing benefits, the Inspectorate evidently believed that only employees who had dedicated their entire working lives to the Service were deserving of a pension.

Most vocal in their objections to the compulsory retirement age were the Outdoor, Coast, Marine and Works staffs. Although employees in these departments were required to serve five years less than their Indoor colleagues before enjoying full benefits, the higher average age on joining the Service of men in the 'outdoor' branches meant that many could entertain no hope of attaining thirty-five years of service before compulsory retirement at the age of sixty. In 1929 the rules were amended to allow voluntary retirement at the IG's discretion for both Indoor and Outdoor employees after thirty years of service, yet men in the 'outdoor' branches argued that the new length of service requirements continued to discriminate against

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[71] CSA, 679(1) 26906, 'Inspector General's circulars, vol. 16, second series, nos. 3,501-3,493, 1921-24', circular no. 3,006, 20 February 1920. Chinese employees were compulsorily retired after forty years of service rather than at age sixty, and received an annuity benefit purchased in silver equivalent to half of their final salary, derived half from Service funds and half from compulsory deductions. Retiring employees were asked to choose the insurance company from which they wished their annuity to be purchased and inform the Inspectorate accordingly. See CSA, 679(1) 26907, 'Inspector General's circulars, vol. 18, second series, nos. 3,501-1,800, 1924-28', circular no. 3,224, 3 November 1921, for further retirement scheme regulations.

[72] Aglen invited comments from his Commissioners on the pensions scheme, and most demanded that the retirement qualification be lowered to thirty years' service. CSA, 679(1) 15439, 'Superannuation and retirement scheme: general questions, 1920-24'. Commissioner Ferguson and his staff at Fuzhou were particularly outspoken in their criticism of the proposed retiring age, so much so that he was openly censured by Aglen for attacking the superannuation plans. See dispatch no. 5,726, Commissioner Ferguson, Fuzhou, to IG Aglen, 21 May 1920.

[73] Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, p. 109 and p. 184.

them in favour of the Indoor Staff.[74] The Acting Engineer-in-Chief drew attention to the fact that because they were required to qualify professionally the average age of men joining the Works Department was thirty-one, meaning that when the time for compulsory retirement came around at the age of sixty they had only served for twenty-nine years and were therefore ineligible for full retirement benefits.[75] On his return from leave the Engineer-in-Chief, Tweedie-Stodart, reiterated his deputy's complaints, declaring that 'if the experienced Works Department man is to be placed on exactly the same footing as the young man joining at twenty [in, for example, the Indoor Staff] this means that the latter's years of learning, training, and minimum usefulness are being given an equal value to the years of fully trained usefulness of the Works Department employee'.[76] High-ranking staff in the Outdoor and Marine Staffs echoed Tweedie-Stodart's criticisms.[77] For senior men in the technical and 'outdoor' branches of the Service the poor recompense they received for their long service at the end of their careers was a bitter blow. Maze, however, refused to amend the retirement regulations further and protests from these branches continued to be sounded into the 1940s.[78]

By the late 1940s Customs employees in all departments had grounds to worry that they would not receive the retirement benefits promised to them in 1920. Post-war currency depreciation meant that the contributions deducted from staff salaries were unlikely to amount to the sum necessary to purchase the promised annuity by the time of retirement.[79] Those British and American employees forced out of the Service

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[74] CSA, 679(1) 26909, 'Inspector General's circulars, vol. 19, second series, nos. 3,801-4,100, 1928-30', circular no. 3,982, 4 October 1929.
[75] CSA, 679(1) 16757, 'General regulations governing superannuation and retirement, 1921-47', dispatch no. 7,063, Engineer-in-Chief Tweedie-Stodart to IG Maze, 24 October 1929.
[76] CSA, 679(1) 16757, 'General regulations governing superannuation and retirement, 1921-47', dispatch no. 3,029, Engineer-in-Chief Tweedie-Stodart to IG Maze, 27 November 1929.
[77] The Coast Inspector, for example, warned that the new pension rules would 'inflict hardship on the technical departments of the Service' and the Harbin Tidesurveyor claimed that they would bear especially hard on the foreign Outdoor Staff. CSA, 679(1) 16757, 'General regulations governing superannuation and retirement, 1921-47', dispatch no. 4,306, Coast Inspector to IG Maze, 17 October 1929 and letter from Chief Tidesurveyor Ryden, Harbin, to IG Maze, enclosed in dispatch no. 3,900, 6 November 1929.
[78] In 1941, for example, the Marine staff stationed at Kowloon submitted a petition to the IG requesting that the length of service required to receive full pension benefits be reduced according to the qualifications of each employee. Those who joined with a master's or first engineer's certificate, for example, should be allowed to retire after thirty years, the petitioners argued. CSA, 679(1) 16757, 'General regulations governing superannuation and retirement, 1921-47,' petition from Kowloon Marine staff enclosed in dispatch no. 11,996, 1 August 1941.
[79] Those who joined the Service after 1920 were at a particular disadvantage in this respect because the Inspectorate issued a 'Service make-up' from Customs funds to pre-1920 appointees to bring their annuity up to the required amount.

in 1941 and the foreign employees who were compulsorily retired in 1943 whilst interned were dismayed to find in 1945 that they would only receive half the pension they were promised in 1920. Little was faced with a deluge of letters from disgruntled former employees who had pinned their hopes of a comfortable retirement on their Customs pension. Former Deputy Commissioner Flanagan, who served in Tianjin from 1939 until his dismissal in December 1941, pronounced the Customs guilty of 'little short of base ingratitude'. 'I have been insulted time and time again in the Tientsin Office [by the Japanese wartime authorities] and have taken it smilingly for the sake of the Service and the Chinese Government and now that very Government turns around and throws me out with a totally inadequate pension at an age when it will be well nigh impossible to obtain suitable employment', Flanagan raged.[80] Little was apologetic, yet admitted that Flanagan's prediction that he would receive a derisory sum as a pension was 'pretty close to the truth'.[81]

Since 1945 Little had, in fact, been subjecting the Ministry of Finance to a continuous barrage of letters requesting that the pensions of employees dismissed in 1941 and 1943 be released yet, despite his best efforts, the cash-drained government replied that it simply did not have the funds.[82] Little did, in June 1947, eventually manage to get the staff their pensions—no thanks to Frederick Maze who Little judged was, throughout his career, 'motivated by one thought: "How will this benefit Me?"'[83] Nevertheless, as their Customs days were drawing to a close in the late 1940s, those men who had joined with expectations of a long career were sorely disappointed at the poor dividends they received in return for years of loyal service.

If the Inspectorate dragged its feet about establishing a pensions scheme it was even more reticent about providing benefits to the families of men who had died or been invalided whilst working for the Service. The Inspectorate wished to be clear on this point, stating in the 1936 staff regulations that 'the Customs Superannuation and Retirement Scheme is only intended to provide for the old age and retirement of

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[80] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.4, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1946', personal letter, H. R. J. W. Flanagan, Hong Kong, to IG Little, 9 February 1946.
[81] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.4, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1946', 21 February 1941.
[82] See, for example, Little papers, FMS Am 1999.2, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1945', personal letter, IG Little to minister of finance, O. K. Yui, 7 May 1945.
[83] CSA, 679(1) 16758, 'General regulations governing superannuation and retirement', circular no. 7,101, 30 June 1947. Little's comment on Maze is taken from the Foster Hall papers, letter from Little to Foster Hall, 16 September 1954.

employees *themselves*, and does not provide for their families'.[84] In the case of the death of a Customs man his family would receive the refund of contributions he had made to the retirement scheme, but would receive no pension unless the employee in question was killed by smugglers.[85] Yet despite the Inspectorate's official refusal to issue allowances to the families of deceased employees, in practice it often acted more charitably. The IG habitually received letters from the children and widows of former Customs men reciting heart-rending tales of poverty and despair. The families of men in the 'outdoor' branches of the Service, who found it difficult to save on their comparatively low wages, were especially at risk if their husbands and fathers suffered an untimely death. One case of the Inspectorate displaying its benevolent side came in 1886 when the son of the late Examiner Samuel Young, who had served in the Customs for twenty-two years, wrote to the Inspectorate asking for employment for himself and an allowance for his mother. At eighteen years old Young's son was the eldest of a family of six, whom he was presently supporting on his clerk's wages of $40 per month. 'I trust that you will also take into consideration the long services of my father, and assist me in obtaining a situation in the Customs which would be more lucrative, and to enable me to assist my mother to support and educate my brothers and sisters', Young pleaded.[86] Hart took pity on the Young family's plight, granting a special allowance to the Examiner's widow and Outdoor employment to his eldest son.[87] In 1882 the Inspectorate again felt obliged to assist the family of a deceased Customs employee, in this case Lightkeeper J. H. Green who had served for eight years, on compassionate grounds. Mrs Green was 'a native', reported the Swatow Commissioner, and was therefore considered 'able to earn a living' in China, yet he nonetheless felt it was his 'duty to strongly recommend the children to your kindness'. The Commissioner enclosed a letter from Mrs Green 'praying for pecuniary assistance, as she has been left destitute with three young children, from

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[84] CSA, 679(1) 21540, *Chinese Maritime Customs: Staff Organisation and Control* (Shanghai, 1936), p. 15.
[85] By way of contrast, the pensions of deceased ICS men automatically passed to the officer's wife and then to his unmarried children. See Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, p. 109.
[86] CSA, 679(2) 1589, 'Shanghai Customs: dispatches to IG, 1886', letter from Young to Commissioner, Shanghai, enclosed in dispatch no. 1,479, 19 October 1886.
[87] CSA, 679(2) 1519, 'Shanghai Customs: dispatches from IG, 1886', dispatch no. 3,293, 29 November 1886, and dispatch no. 3,304, 6 December 1886.

two to seven years of age'. Again, the IG was moved to grant an allowance.[88] The Inspectorate evidently recognised the vulnerability of the families of deceased 'outdoor' men and usually acted with paternalistic responsibility towards them.

The letters received from the family of the deceased on the death of a Customs man are also revealing in a different sense. It was common practice for migrants across the empire world to remit a portion of their wages to family members and dependents at 'home'—an obligation to support relations was often, in fact, the primary motivation for seeking work in empire. As Gary Magee and Andrew Thompson have shown in their analysis of remittance flows between the UK and Australasia, North America and South Africa, rather than renouncing ties to the homeland, 'such streams of money pay testimony to the capacity of British migrants to construct complex webs of association stretching across the English-speaking world from their place of settlement all the way back to their place of origin'.[89] Although more pronounced in settler colonies, patterns of remitting money to family and dependents at home also existed in the wider empire world and Customs wages often travelled thousands of miles to reach their beneficiaries. On receiving a pay rise in 1863, which increased his annual salary to the equivalent of £600, Edward Bowra wrote jubilantly to his mother 'I am less glad for my own sake than for yours, as I can now send you at least a hundred a year'.[90]

After the establishment of the Customs pension scheme in 1920 the Inspectorate received countless letters from the families of deceased Customs employees who had received financial support from the employee in question before his death and now sought to stake their claim to his pension benefits. In 1929, for example, current NRS J. W. Stephenson wrote to the Shanghai Commissioner, Myers, on behalf of the mother of recently-deceased Chief Assistant K. W. Power. 'His Mother was very distressed', reported Stephenson, and was 'very much harassed about financial matters, as her son, who had no private means, contributed to her

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[88] CSA, 679(2) 1868, 'Swatow Customs: dispatches and enclosures to IG, 1882-3', dispatch no. 38, 6 March 1882. The Green family then moved to Shanghai with the financial help of Rev Dr Farnham of Shanghai, an acquaintance of the late Mr Green.

[89] Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, 'The Global and Local: Explaining Migrant Remittance Flows in the English-Speaking World, 1880-1914', *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 66, no. 1 (2006), pp. 177-8. Magee and Thompson use money order data to examine the amount and character of British migrant remittance flows and the motivations which lay behind them.

[90] SOAS, MS 201813, Bowra papers, box 3, file 3, 'Manuscript letters from Edward Charles McIntosh Bowra informed his family, 1863-74', letter from Bowra, Tianjin, to his mother, 30 May 1863. The following month Bowra told his father that his wages were 'more than I need', and told his parents to feel free to ask for more money if they needed it; letter from Bowra to his father, 16 June 1863.

support; and she is now deprived of that support'. Mrs Power was even more 'anxious to know if there is any money coming to her as next-of-kin from the Customs' in view of the fact that she was being pressured to repay her son's debts by the Bank of Ireland.[91] This particular request seemed concrete enough and after receiving proof of his mother's meagre income the Inspectorate granted a refund of Power's contributions to the retirement scheme. A similar request submitted by N. A. Konovaloff, brother of Chief Assistant S. A. Konovaloff who died in Shanghai in 1929, was also approved. N. A. Konovaloff, himself a former Customs Commissioner who had resigned from the Service in 1916, submitted his claim on behalf of another brother, A. A. Konovaloff, and his family of three children. 'The late S. A. Konovaloff has been supporting them, as well as an orphan niece of ours, for a number of years until his death when, owing to the conditions in Russia, A. A. Konovaloff became practically destitute', he explained. Maze was satisfied of the legitimacy of the family's claim, helped perhaps by the weight that N. A. Konovaloff's name carried in the Service, and pension benefits were duly issued.[92] Others were not so lucky; the Inspectorate was quick to dismiss claims which seemed too much like money-grabbing.[93] The Inspectorate decided which claims were spurious and which petitioners were worthy beneficiaries at its discretion and was inclined to reject applications from those who were not on the brink of poverty.

Petitions from the impoverished relatives of deceased Customs men multiplied in the 1940s. The inability of the Chinese government to release pension benefits to foreign employees until 1947 left the spouses and children of Customs men who had died during the war in desperate need of an income. In 1946 NRS Foster Hall wrote to Little describing the miserable situation of Mrs Broomfield, widow of Chief Lightkeeper G. Broomfield who died in 1943, and her five children, who had recently returned to Britain penniless. 'In view of her plight I had to help her from my own pocket', Foster Hall reported, 'and she is now receiving a pittance from the Public Assistance Board, in other words Charity'. Hall urged the IG to give him news of when the 'several thousands of pounds' in pay and pension arrears owed to her would

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[91] CSA, 679(1) 15606, 'Foreign Indoor employees deceased, 1929-30', semi-official letter, NRS Stephenson to Commissioner Myers, Shanghai, 24 June 1929.
[92] In his capacity as Commissioner N. A. Konovaloff had overseen the development of the Customs establishment at Harbin during its first years, 1907-10.
[93] In 1929, for example, Maze turned down the application of deceased Third Assistant M. Powell's father for post-mortem pay. CSA, 679(1) 15606, 'Foreign Indoor employees deceased, 1929-30', Lungchintsun dispatch no. 1,570, 16 August 1929, enclosing letter from Powell's father.

be issued, 'particularly as I am very anxious to avoid publicity which may react on the good name of the Service'.[94] Unlike colonial civil services, which experienced something of a revival in terms of the career opportunities they offered in the post-war period, the Customs was unable even to issue the pensions due to its employees.[95]

The inability of the Inspectorate to provide financially for its staff and their families undoubtedly contributed to the Service's diminishing international standing and reputation in the 1940s. Concern about the Service's international reputation had, however, influenced decisions to issue benefits to Customs employees and their families from the earliest days of the Service. Stories of the families of late Customs men living in poverty because the Inspectorate refused to offer them assistance would have done nothing to enhance the Customs' image. When a retirement plan was finally established it was an astute move in keeping with trends amongst other overseas and civil services; the Customs could not be seen to be failing to keep up with the progress made by its contemporaries on the matter of staff benefits. Although the Inspectorate clearly did exercise some paternalistic benevolence when dealing with certain ex-employees, and was sometimes moved to issue extra benefits on compassionate grounds, a concern with maintaining the Service's good name lay beneath its acts of charity.

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[94] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.4, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1946', private letter, Foster Hall to IG Little, 9 January 1946.
[95] See Kirk-Greene, *On Crown Service*, for the revival of colonial service careers in the late 1940s and 1950s.

3) Life after the Service

For Westerners in the empire world the term 'home' evoked multiple meanings.[96] As Elizabeth Buettner has shown in her analysis of British-Indian families in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, concepts of home 'united what were often highly idealized understandings of the nation, family intimacy, and domesticity'.[97] For most British colonial officials Britain was always invested with the idea of 'home' and an ultimate return there, accompanied by an end to the frequent transfers and family separations which often characterised colonial life, was almost a certainty. The question 'where was home?' is, however, much more difficult to answer when asked of Customs men. The multinational staff inevitably held competing national allegiances from the beginning of their careers, and experienced ties to their home nations, to the Customs Service, to China and to empire. As a result of these ambiguous loyalties the post-Service lives of Customs men followed no clear patterns. There were those for whom leaving the Service signified a welcome return to a national homeland, those for whom China had become an adopted 'home', and those for whom the wider empire world presented manifold opportunities for belonging. Unfortunately, the picture of the post-Service destinations of Customs men is unavoidably hazy. The Inspectorate rarely recorded the whereabouts and occupations of its former employees and there existed no veterans association to keep track of former-CCS men. This section will, however, attempt to reconstruct a rough picture of the lives of ex-Customs men in the years following their withdrawal from service. Such a picture, however cloudy, is invaluable to determining the loyalties, sense of belonging, and attachments of the foreign personnel.

The geographical destinations of men in their post-Customs lives are particularly telling of the strength of their national identities and loyalties, and of the opportunities available to them in China as opposed to at 'home'. Many former employees in the Indoor and 'outdoor' branches alike went on to help staff foreign China. The Inspectorate's periodic reminders that Customs men should consider themselves distinct in ethos and outlook from the wider foreign presence in China were often promptly forgotten when a more lucrative employment offer came along. Certain enterprising individuals found more rewarding work in foreign China coast

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[96] For a discussion of the multiple meanings evoked by the term 'home' see the special edition of *New Formations*, 'The Question of "Home"', no. 17 (1992), especially Doreen Massey, 'A Place Called Home?', pp. 3-15.
[97] Buettner, *Empire Families*, p. 190.

firms. After resigning in 1920, for example, Rasmussen worked with Arnold, Karberg and Co. in Zhenjiang and Tianjin for twenty-seven years before he again uprooted, this time to London.[98] The nineteenth-century Customs often drew on the pool of student interpreters for the British consular service when recruiting Indoor men but the flow of personnel could also move in the other direction. Willard Straight, for example, after resigning from the Customs in 1904 after only two years of service became a Reuters correspondent and then enjoyed a long career in the US consular service. Others went on to work for the non-official British establishment in China. J. O. P. Bland, for example, emerged as an outspoken champion of British imperialism and settler interests in China after leaving the Service in 1896, working for the Shanghai Municipal Council and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank until he left China for good in 1911.[99] For some Outdoor, Coast and Marine men China became an adopted homeland for different reasons. Whereas Indoor men joined the Customs with a long career in China followed by a return home in mind, men in the 'outdoor' branches were much more likely to settle in China for the long-term. Many Outdoor men married Chinese women and brought up families in China, creating strong bonds to the East. Those with Chinese wives and families, moreover, perhaps much preferred to stay in China than face potential prejudice towards them and their families at 'home'.

Others had no such ties in China and were less successful in finding alternative employment after leaving the Customs. Prolonged stays in China were not a matter of choice for these men, who as a rule lacked the funds to buy a passage home. A case in point is the example of former Tidewaiters A. H. Kaye and P. W. Poutney, discharged from the Service in 1921 for misconduct, who found themselves marooned in China after realising that they could not afford return passages to Britain and could find no other employment in the treaty ports. As the pair were both British ex-servicemen they eventually turned to the United Services Association for help, which in turn appealed to the British consul in Shanghai, Fraser, on their behalf. In the opinion of Colonel Johnson of the United Services Association the Customs was 'very hard on this type of man, i.e. one who had no technical qualifications, that he should be liable to be thrown on his own resources in a foreign country at any time if

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[98] See Rasmussen's second memoir, *China Trader*, for an account of his working life in China.
[99] Robert Bickers, 'Bland, John Otway Percy (1863-1945)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds.), (Oxford, 2004).

he misbehaves himself'.[100] When approached on the matter IG Aglen was derisive of the Association's representations, pointing out that 'it is perfectly obvious that if I were to hold out any expectation that I would pay the passages Home of men who have to be dismissed or discharged as a result of disciplinary action in the Ports, it would be quite impossible for me to go on recruiting foreign officers in the Outdoor Staff'. The Inspectorate invariably took a strict line on taking back dismissed or discharged employees, in contrast to the SMP, which had fewer misgivings about re-employing men.[101] Aglen grudgingly agreed to re-employ Poutney but was unrelenting in Kaye's case, who presumably found his own way home.[102] Indigents such as Kaye and Poutney were a cause for concern for the British consular establishment in China, and their cases consequently reached the highest levels of foreign authority in China. The presence of impoverished and itinerant British nationals did nothing to enhance their country's prestige in China and various relief organisations—such as the United Services Association and the Salvation Army—worked to keep them off the streets.[103] Some were repatriated, travelling home by steerage. Men like Kaye and Poutney are, moreover, also representative of the frequent personal failures experienced by men and women across the empire world and the more miserable side of colonial life encountered by such individuals.

Although Indoor employees expected China to provide long-term employment, it was never intended to become a permanent homeland. Indeed, across the empire world many migrants of all socio-economic statuses always intended to ultimately return home after building up a nest egg in one of the colonies or dominions, and they often made a series of temporary migrations punctuated by periods of time at home during the course of their lives.[104] Especially for British Customs employees, those

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[100] TNA, London, FO 228/3497, letter from Colonel Marr Johnson, United Services Association, to Shanghai consul-general E. Fraser, 11 June 1921, enclosed in dispatch from Shanghai consul-general E. Fraser to Sir Beilby F. Alston, British minister to China, 24 June 1921. Poutney and Kaye were appointed in London in 1918 as part of the London recruitment drive intended to fill the depleted foreign Outdoor ranks (see Chapter One).

[101] Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, p. 239.

[102] FO 228/3497, letter from IG Aglen to British minister to China Sir Beilby F. Alston, 26 July 1921. Another case of an ex-Customs employee approaching the British consular authorities with a view to extracting further benefits from the Inspectorate involved former First Class Tidewaiter Denis McDermott. McDermott resigned from the Service in 1916 and in 1920 complained to the Foreign Office that the Customs had withheld his pay and passage allowance. The Inspectorate denied that McDermott was owed any benefits. See FO 228/3497, correspondence between the Foreign Office, the British minister to China, R. H. Clive, and Chief Secretary Bowra, 7 September 1920 to 2 April 1921.

[103] Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, pp. 235-38.

[104] See Dudley Baines, *Emigration from Europe, 1815-1930* (Cambridge, 1995), Chapter Five, 'Return Migration', pp. 35-8.

returning home, whether temporarily or for retirement, joined a larger flow of travellers and migrants from all parts of the empire moving in and out of the imperial metropole.[105] The lives of foreign Customs staff, then, often followed broader, accepted patterns of migration to the non-European world.

Certain senior foreign Commissioners, however, after serving for over thirty-five years in the Customs, were reluctant to leave their second homeland. Some stayed for political reasons; the Russian Revolution discouraged Commissioner N. A. Konovaloff, who resigned in 1916, from returning 'home' and he chose instead to settle in Peiping. Another Russian, Commander Potoloff, who was reluctantly invalided out of the Customs in 1933 after thirteen years in the Service, admitted that it was 'hard to quit the work and the sea, which I detest after 33 years of it, but which I miss so much when I am on shore'. Unable to return to his homeland Potoloff dreamt of settling down with his wife 'in an obscure French village, where a vegetable garden and a few chickens will probably feed us until "something happens"', but he evidently viewed his future with deep uncertainty.[106] On the eve of his retirement in 1933 Italian Commissioner Luigi de Luca informed Maze that he intended to settle in Peking or Tianjin, and that his sister, the widow of former Commissioner C. N. Holwill, and her daughter would be joining him as they found 'life difficult in America'. The effects of the Depression in America and Europe evidently made life in China an attractive alternative in the 1930s. Furthermore, de Luca was simply *used* to China; his father had been Italian minister to China in the 1880s and he had consequently spent his childhood in Peking, joining the Customs Service in 1898. 'As for me, having spent the greater part of my life, boy and man, in China and having no very close ties in Italy, I don't feel inclined to leave this country and start at my age a new life elsewhere', de Luca confessed.[107] By the end of a long career China had sometimes usurped a national homeland in the affections of Customs men.

Most long-serving foreign employees, however, returned 'home'. Working in China did not mean that 'home' was forgotten; most men went to considerable lengths to maintain their links with family and friends and carried a deep nostalgia for their

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[105] Schneer, *London 1900.*
[106] CSA, 679(9) 1419, 'Staff Secretary's office: Semi-official and confidential correspondence during 1933-35,' letter, Commander Potoloff to Coast Inspector Hillman, 21 November 1933.
[107] CSA, 679(1) 31644, 'IG's confidential correspondence with port Commissioners, 1932-33', personal letter, Commissioner de Luca, Tianjin, to IG Maze, 7 February 1933.

national homeland with them throughout their careers. Letters helped to bridge the distance between employees and their family and friends and also kept them in touch with personal and cultural developments at home.[108] Long leave provided an extended opportunity for staff to refresh their sense of national identity, reinforcing a sense of difference from Chinese society and helping to ensure that employees, especially Indoor men, did not become too attached to China. Returning 'home', however, and establishing a new life and sometimes a new career in a country which must have seemed foreign after so many years in China was often a daunting prospect.

More is known about the destinations of former employees from 1941 onwards, although the experiences of those who withdrew from service during this tumultuous time were somewhat atypical. For one, mainland China had ceased to be a desirable retirement destination in the wartime and post-war years. In 1958, C. F. A. Wilbraham, an ex-Commissioner who regularly kept Little up to date with the movements of his former staff in the years after the Foreign Inspectorate's disbandment, reported that G. Ellis, a former printer in the Statistical Department, was still living in Shanghai and was probably 'the last foreigner of the CMC still there'.[109] A large number of Customs men whose careers were cut short in the 1940s and who did not wish to leave Asia moved to Hong Kong instead. Wilbraham, himself a Hong Kong resident in the 1950s noted that 'I'm continually dropping across ex-CMC-ites'.[110] Hong Kong was also a popular destination for those who could not return home, particularly 'stateless' employees who had sought refuge in the Customs and had hoped to find a permanent home in China. Former Customs Captain A. M. Troyan, who had fled persecution in Russia in 1920, wrote to Little from Hong Kong in 1953 reporting that 'I am still stateless, i.e. "person without personality"— existing but not existing legally'. 'I left Russia because of communism in 1920', Troyan lamented, and in 1948 he had been forced to leave 'the best service I ever got' for the same reason. Whereas most Customs men found in retirement a welcome end to the constant transfers and movements that had characterised their Customs careers, for Russian émigrés it threatened further dislocation. Still, like Wilbraham, Troyan

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[108] For an analysis of the importance of letters in sustaining 'imperial families' through times of separation see Buettner, *Empire Families*, Chapter Three, 'Separations and the Discourse of Family Sacrifice', pp. 110-45.

[109] Little papers, BMS 1999, box 1, folder 7, 'Miscellaneous correspondence, 1959-60', letter from C. F. A. Wilbraham, Hong Kong, to Little, 23 March 1958.

[110] Little papers, BMS 1999, box 1, folder 6, 'Miscellaneous correspondence, 1956-8', letter from C. F. A. Wilbraham, Hong Kong, to Little, 15 October 1956.

emphasised that he was not alone in Hong Kong. Naming several ex-Customs acquaintances now resident there he assured Little that 'they are still all going strong, and all remember the "good olde days" and happy life in the Customs Service; they all keep the good old tradition of Customs brotherhood'.[111] The Inspectorate's efforts at cultivating Customs camaraderie had not been lost on the foreign staff and proved particularly useful in the uncertain times which followed the 1940s exodus of the foreign personnel. Maintaining contact with ex-colleagues who had shared similar life and career experiences in China created a reassuring sense of belonging amongst displaced Customs men.[112]

Like other Britons in China, many British Customs men chose to make a new start in one of the British Dominions, especially in Australia and Canada, rather than returning home.[113] In a 1956 letter Wilbraham reported that he knew of seven ex-CCS men who had chosen to try their luck in Australia and most appeared to be prospering in their new home.[114] 'I occasionally hear from both Abbott and McNeale [former Chief Tidesurveyors], the former in Perth and the latter Sydney, and they say that all of the ex C.M.C.s down there are doing quite well', reported Wilbraham in a 1958 letter.[115] Although emigration to the Dominions was being less zealously marketed in the 1940s than it had been in the interwar period, when the Empire Settlement Act (1922) and Empire Marketing Board had worked tirelessly to provide incentives for British migration to the colonies, Australia and Canada were nonetheless attractive destinations for Customs men unexpectedly discharged from the Service. As Stephen Constantine has observed, Australia, New Zealand and Canada were increasingly seeking skilled and professional migrants in the 1940s rather than the unskilled demographic they had previously attracted.[116] Long-serving

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[111] Little papers, BMS 1999, box 1, folder 4, 'Miscellaneous correspondence, 1953', letter from A. M. Troyan, Hong Kong, to Little, 23 August 1953.

[112] See Buettner, *Empire Families,* pp. 209-38, for an analysis of the continuing efforts to maintain India connections within the British-Indian community after their return to Britain.

[113] Many ex-SMP men, for example, emigrated to Australia or Canada after leaving the Customs. See Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, Chapter Nine, 'Adrift in the Empire World', pp. 223-50, for the post-SMP destinations of Shanghai policemen.

[114] Little papers, BMS 1999, box 1, folder 6, 'Miscellaneous correspondence, 1956-8', letter from C. F. A. Wilbraham, Hong Kong, to Little, 15 October 1956.

[115] Little papers, BMS 1999, box 1, folder 7, 'Miscellaneous correspondence, 1959-60', letter from C. F. A. Wilbraham, Hong Kong, to Little, 23 March 1958.

[116] See Constantine, 'British Emigration to the Empire-Commonwealth', 16-35. On emigration to the Dominions also see Stephen Constantine (ed.), *Emigrants and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions between the Wars* (Manchester, 1990). Australia was also a popular post-war destination for Jewish refugees who had fled from Europe to China during the 1930s. See Antonia Finnane, *Far From Where?: Jewish Journeys from Shanghai to Australia* (Melbourne, 1999).

Customs men were, therefore, ideal specimens for emigration to the Dominions in the post-war period. The attraction of life in Australia, New Zealand and Canada, moreover, also worked on a symbolic level. A return to the austerity and deprivations of post-war Britain would have been an uninviting prospect for many. For those who had enjoyed the elevated social status and material benefits which accompanied living in China, the Dominions appeared to offer greater opportunities to maintain these standards than would have been possible in Europe. Furthermore, as Kathleen Paul has shown, white residents in the Dominions were clearly viewed as the compatriots of the British, bound together with Britain in a 'single family' through perceived cultural and racial ties, particularly in the late 1940s and 1950s when the formal structures of empire were beginning to be dismantled.[117] For Customs men for whom a national homeland was a distant memory, and especially for those who were British, the Dominions offered a realistic alternative that was socially and economically more appealing than a return 'home'.

Those who did not stay in the Customs until retirement and who left China on withdrawing from service also had the problem of finding a new career. For a small. but significant number of men joining the Customs sparked a life-long fascination with China and the Chinese language, which manifested itself in their post-Customs careers. The Customs inadvertently produced a handful of scholars of Chinese language and history. Sir Thomas Francis Wade, China consul and diplomat and short-lived Inspector General of the Customs in 1854, for example, had a successful side-career producing authoritative texts on the Chinese language.[118] H. B. Morse, in the Service 1874-1909 pursued a successful post-Customs career as a historian of China's trade and international relations. Long-serving River Inspectorate employee G. R. G. Worcester's passion for Chinese junks led him to spend eight years detached from routine service in the 1930s with the purpose of honing his knowledge of the subject, resulting in the publication of five technical volumes on Chinese vessels.[119]

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[117] Kathleen Paul, 'Communities of Britishness: migration in the last gasp of empire', in Stuart Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester, 2001), pp. 180-217. In contrast to the welcoming hand extended by the British government to migrants from former white settler colonies, the hostile reaction to black migrants from the West Indies in the late 1940s and 1950s betrayed the exclusive nature of British nationality.

[118] Hans J. van de Ven, 'Wade, Sir Thomas Francis (1818-95)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds.), (Oxford, 2004).

[119] See Worcester's memoir, *The Junkman Smiles* (London, 1959) for an account of his years spent researching junks in inland China. Four of the technical volumes published by Worcester are: *Junks and Sampans of the Upper Yangtze* (Shanghai, 1940); *Notes on the Crooked-Bow and Crooked-Stern*

Others who fancied themselves as writers drew on their Customs experiences to pen memoirs or light fiction, with varying degrees of literary success; J. O. P. Bland, Paul King and his wife Veronica, C. S. Archer, A. H. Rasmussen, W. F. Tyler and L. C. Arlington are a few of those who published Customs or China-themed literature in English after leaving the Service.

Whereas Customs men in earlier years were able to plan for their retirement or second careers with a certain degree of ease, the future plans of men unexpectedly forced out of the Service in the 1940s were fraught with uncertainty. Marine Assistant Owen Gander, dismissed in December 1941 after twenty-seven years of service, encapsulated the anxiety which permeated the foreign Customs staff still resident in Shanghai in 1942. In the midst of evacuations Gander wrote:

> The idea of arriving in England with no money, no means of support for my family, is horrible. It seems to be highly undesirable to make definite arrangements to leave Shanghai until I have money or some definite assurance that will take the place of money.

Gander had, moreover, a strong attachment to Asia, professing to prefer 'life in the East', and decided that 'if I leave China with nothing after spending over 28 years of my life here the reasons must be strong and urgent ones'.[120] The reasons for leaving did, of course, become urgent and Gander, who was interned along with his family in Yangzhou camp early in January 1943, lived to regret his earlier reluctance to evacuate.

Of course, the employees of all major overseas services experienced a degree of anxiety in the age of decolonisation, but foreign employees in the Customs suffered more than most. The 700 British officers still serving the Indian Civil Service in 1947, for example, were presented with the option of either continuing their careers in the successor Indian Administrative Service, the Civil Service of Pakistan, of taking up a post in one of the Dominions, or of choosing early retirement with compensation on the dissolution of their service.[121] Even former Shanghai policemen fared better than Customs men at the end of the war; they were helped by the Foreign Office into jobs

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Junks of Szechwan (Shanghai, 1941); *The Junks and Sampans of the Yangtze: a study in Chinese nautical research,* 2 vols. (Shanghai, 1947-48).

[120] IWM, 86/44/1, Owen D. Gander papers, manuscript diary, vol. 1, entry on 22 March 1942.

[121] See Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, Chapter Nine, 'Decolonization, Early Retirement and Second Careers,' pp. 261-73. The ICS second careers procedure provided a model for the CAS (from the decolonisation of Ceylon and Palestine in 1948 to the Gold Coast and Malaya in 1957, and up until Hong Kong in 1997) and the SPS (1953-55), both of which offered their officers transfer to other colonies. Attempts to re-employ ex-CAS men in Her Majesty's Overseas Civil Service (HMOCS), created in 1956, however, failed.

in the Hong Kong police, in the War Crimes Commission in Singapore, in Germany and in former Italian colonies in North Africa.[122] Foreign Customs employees dismissed or 'paid off' between December 1941 and 1945 received no such guarantees of future employment or reparations for their premature loss of career. Those who escaped internment returned home, usually to serve in the war, full of uncertainty as to what the future would bring. Commissioner B. E. Foster Hall was one of the lucky ones. On his return to Britain he managed to secure a post in the Far Eastern Department of the Colonial Office before being asked to take the helm of the London Office in September 1943. Other Commissioners found less satisfying employment, or else could not find a job at all; Commissioner Morgan 'is school-mastering in Dorset' and former Shanghai Commissioner Myers 'is still trying to get a job', Hall reported.[123] It was, however, wartime and so suitable job openings were thin on the ground for exiled Customs men. After the war many of those who were dismissed or interned—including Hall—were recalled to China and re-employed, yet war-ravaged China was a very different place from the China they remembered.

Prominent figures in the foreign staff had few problems in finding alternative employment on leaving the Customs, although it was not always easy to adjust. Hall was offered a lucrative second career with an American insurance company in Hong Kong in 1948, although he had to study for two years before he could qualify for a position. The transition was by no means an easy one—as Hall pointed out, 'it is quite interesting but rather a new line for an ex-civil servant'— but the ex-Commissioner was thankful to have secured a post of any kind in view of his advancing years.[124] Ex-Coast Inspector F. Sabel, who stayed until the end after rejoining the Service in 1945, moved seamlessly from working for the Customs to advising the UN on navigational matters in the 1950s.[125] Former IG Little was certainly not short of job offers in the years following the end of the Inspectorate. He put his Customs expertise to good use in the early 1950s in various positions, acting as advisor to the Philippines Customs, the Japanese Customs Service and the Chinese

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[122] Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, p. 322.
[123] B. E. Foster Hall papers, letter from B. Foster Hall, London, to Little, 8 October 1943.
[124] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.9, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1948', letter from B. Foster Hall, Kent, to Little, 19 March 1948. A few years earlier, in 1944, Hall had expressed a reluctance to retire, confessing that 'I have five years to run [before retirement] and I hope that some niche may be found for me before they expire'. See Little papers, FMS Am 1999.1, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1941-44', letter from B. Foster Hall, London, to Little, 30 June 1943.
[125] Little papers, BMS Am 1999, box 1, folder 6, 'miscellaneous correspondence, 1956-58,' letter from Little to Howard Abbott, Perth, 10 January 1957.

Ministry of Finance in Taiwan, was offered and turned the job of Commissioner of the US Customs, and worked for the US Information Agency, 1955-60.[126] On his eventual retirement in 1960 Little wrote that 'after forty years of service under a foreign government, it has been a privilege to have served my own government for five years'.[127] This was not a privilege which presented itself to all long-serving ex-CCS men, however. Reporting on the activities of former Customs employees now resident in Hong Kong in 1958, Wilbraham surmised; 'the trouble is that the majority of them having been in the Service for 20-30 years are now in the neighbourhood of 50, and at that age it is most difficult to obtain a post unless one happens to be a specialist, and how many can be classed as that, in a business sense?' Although many former Customs employees with seafaring experience had simply returned to their pre-Customs occupations on leaving the Service, for unskilled Outdoor men and the office workers of the Indoor Staff second career possibilities in Asia were thin on the ground. Wilbraham did, however, also cite a stream of ex-Customs employees, usually of a younger ilk, who had managed to find employment in Hong Kong, often as clerks for the colonial authorities, the armed forces or for various foreign firms based in Hong Kong. Yet even these jobs were threatened, he reported, owing to reductions in staff because of government cutbacks.[128] The move from mainland China to British colony did not always live up to the expectations of ex-Customs men, and neither was it always advantageous.

Those who embarked on second careers at 'home' or elsewhere in the empire world fared better. Wilbraham reported that, according to ex-Commissioner Rouse now living in London, 'practically all of our people who went home are doing pretty well, and others who obtained posts in Africa, Australia, etc, are proving that the old 'Haikuan' training was so varied that they are able to hold their own with anyone'.[129] The foreign staff certainly pursued a wide variety of careers in their post-Customs lives. Various Outdoor men who had decided upon Australia after leaving the

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[126] See Little papers, BMS Am 1999, box 1, folder 1 for Little's recommended reforms for the Japanese Customs Service, 1950; folder 2 for correspondence concerning Little's mission to the Philippines, 1951; folder 3 for Little's work with the Advisory Committee on Undeveloped Areas, 1952-52; and folder 5 for correspondence regarding his post with the Chinese Ministry of Finance (resigned 1954).
[127] Little papers, BMS Am 1999, box 1, folder 7, 'miscellaneous correspondence, 1959-60', letter from Little to George V. Allen, US Information Agency, 1 August 1960.
[128] Little papers, BMS Am 1999, box 1, folder 7, 'miscellaneous correspondence, 1959-60', letter from C. F. A. Wilbraham, Hong Kong, to Little, 23 March 1958.
[129] Little papers, BMS Am 1999, box 1, folder 7, 'miscellaneous correspondence, 1959-60', letter from C. F. A. Wilbraham, Hong Kong, to Little, 23 March 1958.

Customs, Wilbraham informed Little, were trying their hand at farming, others had gone into business, and one had become a blacksmith. For others their Customs training proved useful. One man simply switched to working in the Australian Customs and former Assistant Staff Secretary King's experience of work in China enabled him to secure a post in the Far Eastern branch of the Australian Foreign Office. For those who had returned to Britain office work appears to have been the career of choice and two former Commissioners had found posts working for the colonial authorities in Nigeria.[130] The second careers of former employees were not particularly illustrious, but then neither were their positions in the Customs; most Customs men were unremarkable figures throughout their Customs careers and they remained undistinguished in their post-Customs lives.

After leaving China Customs men became even more acutely aware of their ordinariness. Although, after years of enjoying a higher social status and standard of living in China, returning Customs men and their families undoubtedly *felt* more distinguished than their middle and working class compatriots at home, they inevitably found that that without the factor of 'race prestige' to set them above and apart from the majority of the population they became real nonentities.[131] Material hardships in addition to social factors also weighed against returning employees; Customs men were simply unable to afford the extravagant lifestyle they had enjoyed in China. The change in Commissioner R. F. C. Hedgeland's style of residence from colonial grandeur in China to cramped terrace on his return to Britain provides a striking visual reminder of the drop in status and standard of living experienced by returning Customs men.

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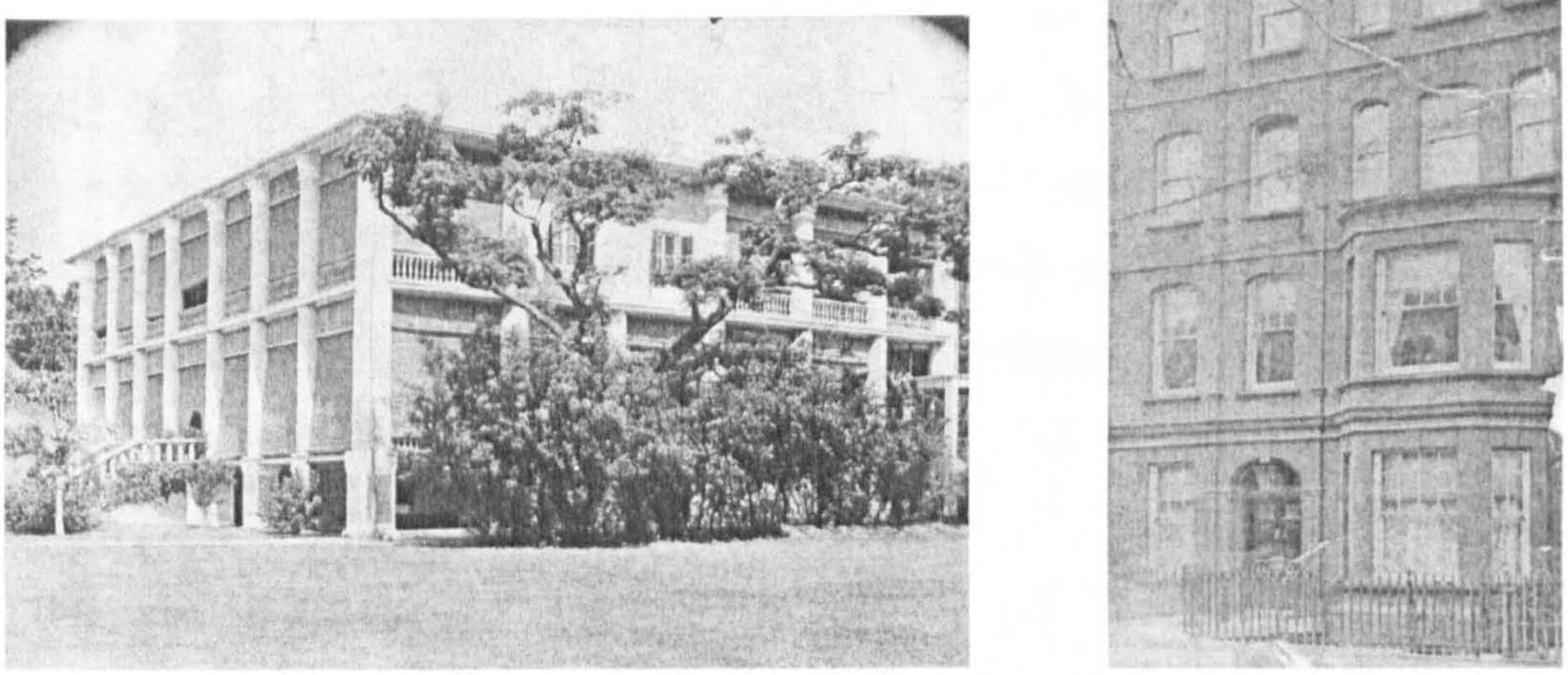
[130] Little papers, BMS Am 1999, box 1, folder 6, 'miscellaneous correspondence, 1956-58', letter from C. F. A. Wilbraham, Hong Kong, to Little, 15 October 1956.

[131] For a detailed discussion of the drop in social status and material hardships experienced by Anglo-Indian families returning to Britain in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see Buettner, *Empire Families,* Chapter Five, 'From Somebodies to Nobodies: Returning Home to Britain and Perpetuating Overseas Connections', pp. 188-251.

Figure 5.1



The Commissioner's house which Hedgeland occupied in Swatow (left) c. 1926 and his house on returning to England in 1930 (right).

For those who retired in the 1940s the situation was even worse. Wartime currency depreciation and the inability of the Chinese government to issue retirement benefits until 1947 combined to ensure that even senior ranking employees received pitiful pay offs on their withdrawal from service. In an anxious letter in 1943 asking for more substantial benefits for the staff NRS Hall cited the case of Commissioner Hamilton, who was invalided in 1942 after twenty-three years of service in receipt of benefits amounting to only £115 per year.[132] In 1946 Hall again wrote to Little on behalf of an ex-Tidewaiter, S. Halliwell, and an ex-Lightkeeper, H. Mitchell, dismissed in 1942 and now in London, 'both of whom have no funds whatever in this country and are living off relations until I am authorised to pay them'.[133] Senior Indoor staff, too, did not emerge from the war unscathed. On his release from internment in 1945 former Commissioner E. A. Pritchard catalogued his loss of savings and possessions during the war. 'I calculate losses at £7000-£8000 excluding sentimental values which are inestimable', Pritchard fumed.[134] Former Commissioner Flanagan also emerged from his Customs career in an impoverished and embittered state. Describing his inventory of losses Flanagan claimed that, 'I end the war with

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[132] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.1, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1941-44', letter from B. Foster Hall, London, to Little, 20 June 1943.
[133] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.4, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1946', letter from Foster Hall, London, to Little, 9 January 1946.
[134] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.2, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1945', letter from E. A. Pritchard, Hong Kong, to Little, 20 September 1945.

90% of my personal belongings in the bottom of Hong Kong harbour, three insurance policies about to be cancelled, a large proportion of my pension lost in Shanghai and my savings used up in keeping my family in London during the war in full expectation that I would be re-employed by the Customs'. 'What an end to what I had hoped was going to be an honourable career', he lamented.[135] Of course, they were at least alive, as were most Britons who had stayed in China for the duration of the war. Yet, with the loss of their material possessions senior Customs men also lost some of their standing and respectability, their expectations of a secure career and comfortable retirement dashed.

[135] Little papers, FMS Am 1999.4, 'L. K. Little, personal correspondence, 1946', letter from Flanagan, Hong Kong, to Little, 9 February 1946.

Conclusion

Throughout their careers foreign employees were imbued by the Inspectorate with a sense of pride in their service's cosmopolitan character. Their post-Service destinations were revealing of whether Customs men really *were* true cosmopolites, individuals who in the words of Robin Cohen and Steven Vertovec were 'prone to articulate complex affiliations, meaningful attachments and multiple allegiances to issues, people, places and traditions that lie beyond the boundaries of their resident nation-state'.[136] In many ways they fit this description. Post-Service destinations reveal how attachment to China and the Customs vied with nostalgia for a national homeland and the enticement of opportunities in the wider empire world in the minds of the foreign staff. The uneasy co-existence of these multiple loyalties meant that withdrawals from service and the post-Service lives of Customs employees followed no clear patterns. In this respect the experiences of the foreign Customs staff present us with a useful lesson in the history of informal empire. The breadth of global and local allegiances in evidence amongst the Customs staff is telling of the breadth of loyalties and affiliations amongst foreign societies in informal empire more broadly. Whereas imperial administrators were expected to sustain clear loyalties to the Crown, the identities of those who lived and worked on the peripheries of empire were often much more ambivalent and heterogeneous.

The foreign staff also left the Service under a variety of personal, professional and political circumstances, which in turn affected their post-Customs lives. It is therefore unsurprising that the experiences of Indoor and 'outdoor' men leaving the Service were often very different, as in so many other aspects of their professional, social and private lives. Most Indoor employees, like other professional administrators in the empire world, always planned to return 'home' at the end of their careers. True to their original intentions the vast majority did so, or else chose to make a new start in one of the Dominions. The loyalties of Outdoor men were much more adaptable in this respect; occupying a low-status socio-economic milieu both at home and in the wider empire world, Outdoor men had nothing to lose by making China their home. Outdoor employees were poorly rewarded by the Customs both during their working lives and afterwards, and the post-withdrawal benefits they could expect to receive were unlikely to support a comfortable retirement at 'home'.

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[136] Robin Cohen and Stephen Vertovec, 'Introduction: Conceiving Cosmopolitanism', in Cohen and Vertovec (eds.), *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice* (Oxford, 2002), p. 2.

The mass dismissals of the 1940s and the eventual dissolution of the foreign staff fundamentally changed the character of withdrawals from Service. Those whose careers were prematurely terminated in the early 1940s found themselves unemployed and forced to begin a new life elsewhere. In addition to offering opportunities for a better life, the empire world also spoke of dislocation and uncertainty. The fact that many chose to make a fresh start in the British Dominions, in Hong Kong or in a different colony also speaks of the complex identity of Customs men. In a time of uncertainty and turmoil the wider colonial world provided multiple chances and locations in which to make a fresh start. Transitions and migrations between and around the outposts of empire and 'home' were not particularly unusual movements for people made aware of what the non-Western world offered to them. Customs men certainly sustained loyalties to their 'home' nation and for the duration of their careers their principal commitment was expected to be to the Customs, yet from the beginning through to the end of their working lives they were always imperial subjects.

Conclusion

Customs Men in the Empire World

The reminiscences of former Customs men are infused with nostalgia, both for their past careers and for time spent in China. Regardless of how tedious and trying they had found work in the Customs and life in China at the time, most Customs men looked back upon their former careers with a certain degree of wistfulness. In his 1959 memoir George Worcester, who had served in the Marine Department for thirty-three years, recalled his emotions as he sailed away from Shanghai almost fifteen years earlier, recollecting how 'my thoughts went back to the country I was leaving, in which I had spent more than thirty happy years of my life; and now... now it was all over and done with'.[1] Back in wartime England, Worcester found that his experiences in the Customs had left a profound impression upon him:

> It was a period of acute food shortage, and I was sent out to stand in food queues. I used to talk to all the housewives, provided they were over 40 years of age, and I well remember one dear old lady who asked me where I came from. 'Madam,' I said, 'I hardly know how to answer your question but, I suppose, it might be said that I come from China'.[2]

Evidently Worcester had taken the Inspectorate's constant reminders of his position as a servant of the Chinese government to heart. At least according to his memoir, his experiences in and loyalty to China and the Customs now coloured his entire identity.

The preceding chapters have explored the experiences of foreign nationals working for the Customs and living in China during the century of the Foreign Inspectorate's existence. Chapter One began at the very beginning, examining the pre-Customs lives of the foreign staff, their motivations for seeking employment in the Service and the Inspectorate's recruitment processes. Subsequent chapters explored the experience of working for the Customs, incidents of malpractice and misconduct, and the social and private worlds occupied by the foreign staff, with a focus throughout on evidence of the endorsement or repudiation of the values and behavioural standards dictated by the Inspectorate. In Chapter Five we reached the endpoint of a career, examining how and why employees left the Service and what they carried with them into their post-Service lives. A central concern has been the nature of the loyalties and identities of the foreign staff, and how working for the

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[1] Worcester, *The Junkman Smiles*, p. 254.
[2] Worcester, *The Junkman Smiles*, p. 9.

Customs and living in China influenced these loyalties and identities over the course of a career. In addressing these concerns I have tried to strike a balance between considering the making of Customs men as individuals, in terms of the diversity of experiences amongst the foreign staff and the influence of personal choices and circumstances on the course of a life and career, and the moulding of a loyal cadre of Customs men immersed in a collective Service culture and ethos. Although a case study, this project has been concerned from the outset with showing how the world of Customs life and work on the periphery of formal empire contributes much to our understanding of the dynamics of work and settlement in the formal empire world.

Much of the literature on the Customs Service to date, both in China and in the West, has been concerned with the extent to which the Foreign Inspectorate operated as an arm of imperialism—particularly British imperialism—in China.[3] Alternatively, Customs histories have assessed the extent to which the Customs Service nurtured modernisation in China, in terms of Hart's role as mediator in China's diplomatic relations with the West, the Inspectorate's navigational and technological modernisations, and its influence on bureaucratic reform. Yet there remains scant work on the Customs' institutional history and almost nothing on its lower level staff. In this study, however, the Inspectorate's relationship with the Chinese state and the diplomatic representatives of foreign powers has been overshadowed by the issue of how the Customs operated as a Chinese government organisation employing a multinational foreign staff, and the peculiar problems and specific Customs identity which grew out of this situation.

The image of the colonist, invariably British, male, upper class and singularly committed to the cause of imperialism, looms large in histories of colonial rule. In considering the allegiances, identity and experiences of the foreign staff this study has also addressed a broad agenda of reassessing such caricatured representations of the type of person who sought work overseas. This thesis is located within a growing body of recent literature which seeks to highlight the diverse socio-economic composition of 'European' colonial societies and the varied motivations and mindsets found within them.[4] It is also placed within a recent move towards exploring the

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[3] See, for example, Fairbank, 'Synarchy under the treaties' and *Trade and Diplomacy.* More recently see Brunero, *Britain's Imperial Cornerstone in China.* On the Chinese side see, for example, Chen and Han, 'Introduction', in *Archives of China's Imperial Maritime Customs.*

[4] See, for example, Bickers, *Britain in China* and *Empire Made Me*; Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power.*

everyday working and social lives of individuals who lived within these communities and of the men and women who staffed the institutions of empire and its outposts.[5]

Richard Eves and Nicholas Thomas have argued that the lives and writings of some colonists threatened to 'undermine the colonial venture by narrating a dissonant tale of failure'.[6] In this study I have sought to articulate further this assertion that the colonial endeavours of 'white' men and women were marked as much by failure as by success. The experiences of Customs employees highlight how many Westerners failed to effectively exploit the potential economic, social and sexual opportunities presented to them by empire and 'to shape the world according to their own aspirations'.[7] Furthermore, the evidence of these personal failures raises questions about the initial expectations of those who chose to work and live in the empire world, and their motivations for doing so. For Customs men, and for their counterparts in other overseas services, success at their individual colonial projects was usually defined as the attainment of reliable employment and a relatively comfortable lifestyle. Work overseas was often a judicious choice and the experiences of the staff of overseas services such as the Customs reveal the extent to which men and women in the Western world were attuned to the employment opportunities presented to them by empire.

Probing the question 'who were the colonists?' and a reassessment of the attractions and opportunities of work overseas also cast doubts upon the assumption that all settlers, workers and sojourners in the colonies felt a deep affinity with the cause of imperialism. The case of the Customs man is, of course, something of an anomaly in this respect; throughout this study I have emphasised that the foreign Customs Staff, as foreign nationals employed by the Chinese government who were ostensibly dedicated to serving China's interests, occupied a complex position in China. In reality, of course, the Foreign Inspectorate was never exclusively devoted to disinterested service of China; the interests it served were predominantly Chinese, but also broadly international and, in particular, British. Customs men, too, were often outspoken about their commitment to the Customs cause, yet this endorsement of the Inspectorate's official standpoint on staff loyalties masked a range of alternative allegiances—to national homelands, to imperialism, and to specific

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[5] See, for example, Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of Authority.*
[6] Eves and Thomas, *Bad Colonists*, p. 144.
[7] Eves and Thomas, *Bad Colonists,* p. 80.

individuals or communities in China. These multiple loyalties co-existed, and sometimes competed, under the surface of unswerving dedication to the Customs, rising to prominence under difficult circumstances. In the minds of settlers, workers and sojourners across empire and its outposts commitment to empire was often tempered by a range of personal concerns and ambitions on the part of individual colonists, which could conflict with the interests and regulations of the colonial state.

To assert that many colonists were not driven throughout their lives overseas by a steadfast commitment to furthering the cause of empire is not to suggest that they were merely bystanders swept away on the currents of an historical process over which they had no control. Customs men and others like them actively participated in building and maintaining empire; they staffed and helped to fashion the institutions and services which governed or policed the colonies, worked for companies which sought to exploit non-Western markets, and wove the social and cultural fabric of 'white' society whilst diligently maintaining distance from colonised peoples. Most Westerners in empire, and most Customs men, were content to enjoy the social, economic and political benefits which accompanied 'white prestige' and most did not wish to see this state of affairs overturned, whatever their professed sympathies to 'native' peoples or governments. Consider, for example, the dismay with which news of the cessation of foreign recruitment and the introduction of accelerated promotion of Chinese staff was met by most foreign Customs employees. More precisely, this thesis has aimed to show that more often than not the potential for a secure career and the professional and economic advancement presented by the empire world were much more salient influences on the decision to work overseas than an unwavering imperialistic sentiment.

This recognition of the adaptability and multiplicity of colonial identities, and of the rather pragmatic motivations of those who chose to chance a career in empire, also underscores the essential ordinariness of most 'colonists'. Although a handful of men distinguished themselves from amongst the Customs ranks by their professional or literary achievements, the vast majority were unremarkable and unromantic figures. There were very few 'great careers'.[8] Studies of the staff of the Customs and similar institutions operating in the empire world, therefore, go some way towards debunking the myth of the cavalier European adventurer and the prosperous Western

[8] Bredon, *Romance of a Great Career.*

entrepreneur effortlessly exploiting overseas markets. The experiences of living and working in China for Customs men were, moreover, usually disappointingly mundane—perhaps unsurprisingly for employees of a revenue-collecting agency. In the words of Willard Straight, Customs work could be 'a damned drudge'.[9] The novelty of life in the non-Western world could at first be beguiling, yet this initial excitement was quickly replaced by the predictability and tedium of routine office work. But excitement, after all, was not what most Customs men were looking for.

The history of the foreign staff also tells the story of the Inspectorate's attempts to mould a cohort of men, well-versed in Customs practice and purpose, grounded in a specific ethos and dedicated to upholding a particular set of Service values. A precedent has been set here by the recent revival of scholarly interest in colonial administrative and policing services and the people who staffed them.[10] Anthony Kirk-Greene, for example, has identified a process of 'deliberate elite formation' employed by prestigious imperial administrative services to mould cadres of expert and loyal administrators.[11] Although no official training system existed for the foreign staff, new recruits were steeped in Customs culture from day one. Throughout their careers the foreign staff were cautioned to remember that they were first and foremost Customs men, imbued from the start with a sense of their difference from other foreigners in China, and must therefore conform to certain behavioural standards in their working, social and private lives. This case study, then, highlights how for the staff of overseas services, especially for long-serving and relatively high-ranking employees, collective service identities were a powerful force which could often supersede other loyalties. The Customs example, however, also shows that service loyalties were not immutable. In particular, as discussed in Chapter Three, the fidelity of low-ranking and low-status employees in the 'outdoor' branches, who were poorly-rewarded and poorly-regarded by the Inspectorate and often less thoroughly immersed in the Customs ethos, was not always guaranteed.

In a wider sense, the collective and individual histories of the foreign staff provide us with a further insight into the profile, culture and values of 'white'

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[9] Quoted in Croly, *Willard Straight*, p. 116.
[10] On the ICS, SPS and Colonial Service see Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, p. 9. On the working and social lives of British DOs in Africa see Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of Authority*. See also his *On Crown Service*. On ICS officers also see Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes* and Potter, *India's Political Administrators*. On colonial police forces see Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, and Anderson and Killingray (eds.), *Policing the Empire*.
[11] Kirk-Greene, *Imperial Administrators*, p. 9.

communities on the peripheries of empire. Since the 1990s a shift away from a narrow focus on colonial policy-making towards a broader agenda of understanding the dynamics of colonial societies and cultures, British and other, has led to a reassessment of these communities.[12] This repositioning has been accompanied by a recognition that European communities in empire were, in the words of Ann Stoler, 'never direct translations of European society planted in the colonies but unique cultural configurations'.[13] The diverse national and social composition of foreign communities in China's treaty ports, and the highly distinctive and locally rooted identities they developed, has also begun to be emphasised in recent years.[14]

This thesis both contributes to and is located within these literatures on 'white' communities in China and in the wider empire world. The foreign Customs staff, which represented a vast spectrum of national and socio-economic backgrounds amongst its staff, can in some respects be viewed as a microcosm of the wider treaty port foreign society. In his memoir, Rasmussen described the foreign staff as a motley assortment of characters:

> The Customs Service at that time was the Foreign Legion of the Far East. There were men from every imaginable stratum of society: remittance men, drunks and sober men, gentlemen and rascals, ignorant and highly educated men. Love of adventure had attracted some of them to the Service; others were probably fugitives from justice, hiding under assumed names, and some like me had joined from dire necessity.[15]

The Customs should not, however, be understood as a cosmopolitan melting pot in which foreigners from all walks of life mixed freely. Rather, the foreign staff is a particularly useful case study through which to contemplate the *divisions* within foreign societies. Perhaps most pertinently, the much-lauded cosmopolitanism of the Customs Service draws attention to the full variety of nationalities—and the range of national allegiances—present within colonial communities. Nationality played an important role in determining a group or an individual's status, a factor which is often neglected in discussions of the impact of race, gender and class on social standing in the colonies—there were huge disparities, for example, between the prestige attached to British nationality and the distaste with which White Russian émigrés were viewed

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[12] On colonial cultures see: Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*; Cooper and Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire*; Hall (ed.), *Cultures of Empire*. For some examples of work on colonial communities and societies see: Kennedy, *Islands of White*; Marshall, 'The Whites of British India'; Morrison, '"White Todas"'.

[13] Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, p. 24.

[14] See, for example, Bickers, *Britain in China*; Bickers and Henriot (eds.), *New Frontiers*; Ristaino, *Port of Last Resort*.

[15] Rasmussen, *China Trader*, p. 16.

in China.[16] In the Customs staff, encompassing men and women of over twenty nationalities amongst its ranks, the full range of people for whom the empire world spoke of opportunity was represented. This thesis has, moreover, considered the Japanese presence and the Western presence in the Customs in much the same terms. Japanese colonialism is often ignored in histories of modern imperial expansion, or else treated as a fundamentally different phenomenon to that of Western colonialism.[17] This study has aimed to show that the Japanese colonial experience was to a certain extent compatible with that of the Western world.

The experiences of the foreign Customs staff also shed more light on the socio-economic divisions within European societies in the empire world. 'White solidarity' was frequently destabilised by entrenched class hierarchies transported from the metropole and reconfigured or intensified in the colonies. Alongside prosperous colonists empire was home to a population of poor and indigent whites who lived on the margins of 'respectable' European society. White pauperism was a cause of much anxiety for colonial authorities, threatening to unsettle the entire fiction of 'white prestige'. Furthermore, as Ann Stoler has discussed at length, definitions of 'Europeanness' were not fixed and neither were they based entirely on race.[18] As Eves and Thomas have commented, colonists soon found that 'one cannot depend on one's whiteness'; personal lapses and a failure to uphold European behavioural and cultural standards could easily weaken an individual's claim to a place within 'white' society.[19]

On taking up his junior post in the Indoor Staff in 1863, Edward Bowra remarked in his diary that, 'a man's career here is in his own hands and he makes or mars his fortunes unaided and unrestrained by those petty restrictions of class and caste and the jealous rivalries which are so rife in convention-ridden, sham-loving, mammon-worshipping England'.[20] Bowra, of course, arrived in China at a time when the nascent foreign communities were just beginning to take root and his idealistic

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[16] For the Russian émigré community in Shanghai see Ristaino, *Port of Last Resort*.
[17] One exception to this is Prasenjit Duara's study of Japanese colonialism in Manchuria, which he places within the global context of imperialism and emergent nationalisms. Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*.
[18] Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, especially Chapters Two, Four and Five. For a discussion of the working class community in Deli, Sumatra, and anxieties about white pauperism see Chapter Two, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule', pp. 22-40.
[19] Eves and Thomas, *Bad Colonists*, p. 72.
[20] Edward Bowra quoted in Drage, *Servants of the Dragon Throne*, p. 80.

notions of the meritocratic and free-thinking nature of these communities would in time be proved wrong. Bowra was, moreover, entering the Indoor Staff, a position which came with a certain amount of social cachet in the treaty port world. The experiences of his colleagues in the Outdoor Staff would no doubt have been very different. From the beginning the Foreign Inspectorate institutionalised class divisions between its Indoor and 'outdoor' branches, and these status disparities were transplanted into the wider treaty port society.

Although the scope of this study is in many respects wide, it inevitably has its limitations. The most obvious omission is a consistent comparison with the experiences of the Chinese staff, which were clearly very different from those of their foreign colleagues. Although this study has outlined the challenges faced by a Chinese state agency employing foreign nationals, it tells us very little about the workings of a foreign-run Chinese state agency employing Chinese. By the same token, the Japanese staff, whose experiences were in some ways similar to those of the other foreign staff but in many ways distinct, deserve a study in their own right. Rather than focusing on the minutiae of the Inspectorate's response to certain political developments or upheavals, this thesis has instead addressed a more expansive agenda of writing the Chinese experience into the history of imperialist expansion and migration. In the future, comparative studies between the employees of the Chinese Customs and other foreign-staffed institutions of informal empire—those which operated, for example, in Egypt and the Middle East—would take this research agenda forward. We know much for, for example, about men like Cromer, but far less about his subordinate staff in the Egyptian service.[21] The conclusions reached from this study of the Customs foreign staff provide a framework for exploring many of the issues they would have faced during their careers.

A further issue addressed in this thesis is the question of legitimacy and the Inspectorate's attempts to rationalise and defend the presence of the foreign staff, particularly in the face of increasing challenges to its autonomy after the Nationalist revolution. In emphasising its modernising achievements and its staff's dedication to disinterested service of China's interests the Inspectorate hoped to guard against

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[21] On Evelyn Baring, First Earl of Cromer and British proconsul in Egypt, see Roger Owen, *Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul* (Oxford, 2004). For the British expatriate community in Egypt see James Whidden, 'Expatriates in Cosmopolitan Egypt, 1863-1956', in Robert Bickers (ed.), *Britons Over the Seas: Settlers and Expatriates in the Formal and Informal Empire* (Oxford, forthcoming 2008).

accusations of collusion with foreign imperialism. What, then, was the final verdict of the foreign employees themselves on their Service's place and legacy in China? Although most Customs writers chose to vent their frustration with the Service in their published memoirs, their dissatisfaction was often tempered by earnest affirmation of the righteousness and ultimate success of the Customs mission. For L. C. Arlington, writing twenty-five years after leaving the Outdoor Staff in 1905, 'no service in the world could show a finer or more honest set of men than those who belonged to the Chinese Customs Service'.[22] Former Coast Inspector W. F. Tyler (in the Customs 1885-1918) judged in 1929 that the Service had reached 'the end of its great purpose' and predicted that 'it will be left a memory in history, which will be an everlasting monument to Hart'.[23] Christopher Briggs, writing in 1997, almost sixty years after leaving the Coast Staff, credited the Customs with creating an 'honest and efficient' system of administration whose 'staff of dedicated Chinese and foreigners worked together in complete harmony and in a great spirit of loyalty and integrity'.[24]

These memoirists were, it must be remembered, writing years, even decades, after leaving the Customs and China and their writings are inevitably infused with a heavy dose of nostalgia for times past. Nostalgia for good times had in empire is, of course, nothing new and has, if anything, intensified in the postcolonial age. Published recollections of colonial lives and careers usually aim to 'enhance the historical record of empire', promoting positive images of Britain's contribution to the colonies and of the motivations of the individual protagonists involved.[25] Customs men, whatever bitterness they harboured about their experiences in the Service, professed in the end to be proud to have contributed to the Foreign Inspectorate's achievements. China, too, was a focus for sentimental recollections and lamentations of the loss of the 'good old days', particularly after the 1949 revolution. G. W. R. Worcester writing in 1959 mourned the passing of 'the old China, the China that has passed away; the wheelbarrow and sedan chair have given up the unequal struggle with the diesel engine and the jet aircraft, the graceful sail has been driven out by the

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[22] Arlington, *Through the Dragon's Eyes*, p. 116.
[23] Tyler, *Pulling Strings in China*, p. 124.
[24] Briggs, *The Sea Gate*, p. 74 and p. 73.
[25] Buettner, *Empire Families*, p. 257. On empire nostalgia also see Antoinette Burton, 'India, Inc.? Nostalgia, memory and the empire of things', in Stuart Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire*, p. 217.

unromantic funnel, and the China that I knew has gone for ever'.[26] Sentimental reminiscences about the China of a bygone era, China of the treaty ports, *their* China, were not uncommon in the memoirs of former Customs men. Looking back, the China which they had experienced, with all its frustrations and tedium, was usurped by the China of the imagination. The ordinary lives they had led there are revealed here in the reports, correspondence and despatches lodged in Nanjing, narrating a tale of routine drudgery, pettiness and disenchantment, discomforts and misadventures. Retrospectively, however, in the minds of Customs men their work as 'China servants' became instead extraordinary.[27] The 'romance' of empire tells us much about imperial ideologies and individual strategies and fictions, but the reality of everyday work and life tells us much more about the world of empire in the heyday of British power overseas.

[26] Worcester, *The Junkman Smiles*, p. 12. For an analysis of 'imperialist nostalgia', with emphasis on how colonists often 'mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed', see Renato Rosaldo, 'Imperialist Nostalgia', in *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (London, 1993), p. 69.
[27] Paraphrased from Archer, *China Servant.*

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